GOLDEN STAR. . . . .
THE QUEEN OF NIGHT } TWO GRAND NEW SERIALS JUST STARTED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 350. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 14TH, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

A GEOGRAPHICAL VIEW OF A GLOBE-ULAR ANTIDOTE.

BEECHAM'S PILLS always BRIGHTON you up like a summer's BATH.
BEECHAM'S PILLS will lift you from the SLOUGH of despondency.
BEECHAM'S PILLS make a bright EYE and a BLYTHE step.
BEECHAM'S PILLS will make you WARE like an IRON BRIDGE.
BEECHAM'S PILLS are good travelling companions wherever you may ROME.
BEECHAM'S PILLS bring a NICE complexion; take one during your IDLE moments.
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BEECHAM'S PILLS are known from TASMANIA to SPITZBERGEN.
BEECHAM'S PILLS have been over ANDOVER again admitted to be worth a NEW GUINEA a box.
BEECHAM'S PILLS should accompany every ship's CREWE, in case illness "springs a LEEK" on them.
BEECHAM'S PILLS will make your constitution as hard as FLINT or STONE.
BEECHAM'S PILLS find a NEW-MARKET and a NEW-PORT daily; their SALE is immense.
BEECHAM'S PILLS are decidedly calculated to bring a DEAL of benefit to you.
BEECHAM'S PILLS are grand nerve reposers when you cannot SETTLE.
BEECHAM'S PILLS are likely to exist as long as STONEHENGE.
BEECHAM'S PILLS have no BOURN, no limit, as to their effectiveness.
BEECHAM'S PILLS have invariably the power to take all the MOLD off you.
BEECHAM'S PILLS will make your spirits light as AYR and buoyant as a CORK.
BEECHAM'S PILLS will quickly take all the WALES and cries out of SYDNEY and ADELAIDE.
BEECHAM'S PILLS annual Sale of Six Million Boxes yearly surely LEEDS the way.
BEECHAM'S PILLS when you have ETON too free, or imbibed too DIEPPE, will right you at once.
BEECHAM'S PILLS truthfully MALAY claim to saving thousands of lives yearly.
BEECHAM'S PILLS are the best present for SUEZ handsome BOW when he is indisposed.
BEECHAM'S PILLS preserve you from the MENAI STRAITS a neglected system is subject to.
BEECHAM'S PILLS glide DOWN as pleasantly as a LONDON oyster.
BEECHAM'S PILLS never fail to cool the system when you BERNE with HITCHIN sensations.
BEECHAM'S PILLS will suit either MISSIS-SIPPI or MISS-OURI at home or travelling.
BEECHAM'S PILLS are PACIFIC in their action; once tried you never TYRE of them.
BEECHAM'S PILLS will benefit either an ASIA MINOR or an adult AMAZON.
BEECHAM'S PILLS have the power of bringing you to a NEW-HAVEN of health.

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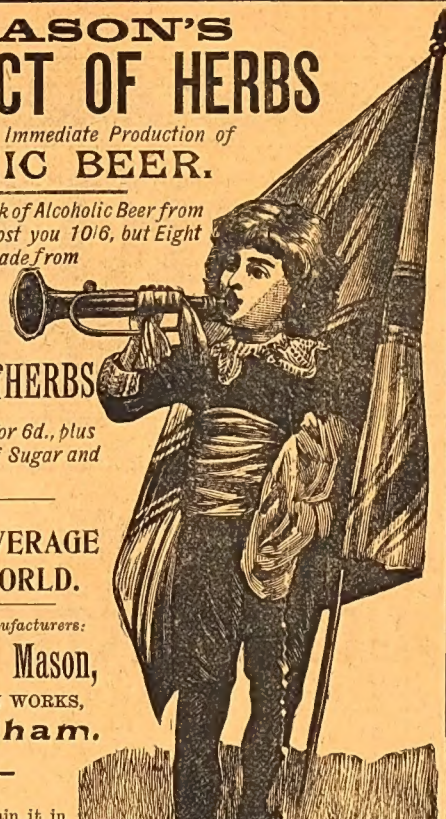

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THE ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD.

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JOHN NOBLE LTD., The Warehouse, MANCHESTER.

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Saves Extraction.
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DR. MACKENZIE'S IMPROVED HARMLESS ARSENIC WAFERS

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SHORT STORIES

LOVE ADVENTURE WAR HUMOUR PATHOS ROMANCE

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 350.] For the Week ending September 14th, 1895. [One Penny.

Merely Coincidence.

THE STORY OF A WITHHELD RUPEE.

I.

"PROTECTOR of the poor, from your wealth, which is boundless, look upon your servant with pity."

"You unmitigated old scarecrow, what do mean by coming to the door of my tent, and doing your abominable gymnastic tricks to offend my eyes? Be off! Do you understand? We give nothing to such as you, you hoary old heathen scamp."

"Of your pity, have pity, sahibs, give a very little unto your servant for his daily needs."

"Take yourself off, old pig, and son of fifty thousand pigs. Comprehendest thou what I say? Pollute no longer the sight of my eyes by thy most hideous presence; it is unto my blood as rennet unto the milk of thy most sacred cow. Be off! I have not the smallest intention of bestowing a single anna upon you, or allowing one of these sahibs to do so, though thou stayest a century of years entreating before me."

Seven Englishmen were sitting in the door of a spacious tent, which had that day been pitched for them in a clearing of the jungle; a hanging lamp swung behind them, and on the table were cigar boxes, decanters of wine, and glasses.

They had dined comfortably, and an excellent day's sport had been the topic of their conversation, until out of the gloom of the fast gathering night had crept the gaunt figure of this fakir, who had squatted himself down before them, and interrupted everything by his monotonous appeal for alms.

Apparently, the old fellow spoke English with a certain facility from the fluency with which he begged, yet he seemed not to comprehend that his demand was rejected, or his person vituperated, as he calmly turned his wrinkled old face with placid composure from one man to another, and went on in a gentle, persuasive monotone with his appeal:

"Protectors of the poor." He held out a little dirty wooden bowl, and seemed to watch for a look of relenting in the eye of anyone. "Look upon your servant, protectors of the poor."

He caught the eye of a fair-haired, sunburnt English lad this time, and made a little involuntary movement forward, as of hope realised, and extended his bowl.

The boy drew back, all the more ashamed of himself because he knew that he had contemplated the venerable beggar with sympathy for the space of one second, and he hated the idea that the other men should consider him soft.

"I have looked at you till I'm sorry for myself," said the boy mockingly. "Where do you hail from? What do *you* want with the 'oof-bird? There ain't no shops nor shows out here in the wilderness. I never was any good at the collecting-bag game, my old friend. Try Bailey, now; he's a soft-hearted chap."

Two or three of the men laughed in a comfortable and subdued way, as if they might find some humour in this observation if they could so far trouble themselves as to be amused; and the old fanatic listened to their mirth and watched their faces with interested, eager eyes, and crouched a little closer up to them, squatting on his heels.

A man blew rings out from the smoke of his cigarette, and watched them melt into the motionless air. Another refilled a pipe and struck a match, which blazed up, and burnt out on the grass where he threw it, while his wicker chair creaked uneasily as he crossed and recrossed his legs, and there was the bubbling sound of a man drawing deeply at a pipe which was a trifle foul,

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and but for such sounds an absolute stillness reigned, while, nothing daunted, the man of mystery sat on.

He was a very venerable old fellow, unusually tall of stature, with thin limbs of the hue of well-polished ancient oak, and his small tufts of snowy hair and the white garment twisted around his body were the most conspicuous objects about him against the background of the night. He was irritatingly patient, and once again he varied his silent persistence by a softly murmured monosyllable of entreaty. The situation became embarrassing.

"Well, you're a pretty object, aren't you?" spoke the boy again, turning round upon his elbow on the arm of his great wicker chair to address the ancient man.

"I wonder, now, if your mother knows you're out so late? What's her candid opinion of you, hey? Can't you do any tricks for the money, then? Turn yourself into a mango tree, or some such trifle, and we might entertain your application, you know. Stand on your head, then, merely for argument's sake, to prove that you're genuine, and the wealth of my waistcoat pocket shall instantly be yours."

The young fellow put a thumb and finger into his watch-pocket, and held up a coin. For a moment the old fakir mistook him. He drew out a long dark arm quickly towards the money, and they saw the whites of his eyes as he raised them to the foolish boy's face.

"No, no, not by any means so cheap! We must have a trick first. You chaps are such swells at these things. Merely tie yourself into a knot for my pleasure, and the bawbee shall be yours."

"Don't take notice of him, Durward. If you chaff him, we shall have the filthy old beast prowling round here all the night. You've no idea what a nuisance these begging fakir chaps can make of themselves among the servants. The men live in awe of them, and they'll lay hands on anything for the sake of satisfying them. A chap like that has no personal property, you know, but he makes a thundering good thing out of begging. Be off, now! Depart, thou hoary impostor, from the door of the tent of the Englishman, whose charity begins and ends at home! And, mark thou my words, let me not hear of thee as interfering with one among the least of all my servants while the camp is here, or I will see thy face again, and the form of my visage then thou shalt never forget."

The old visitor had listened with mild-eyed interest; but he comprehended now full well. And, at length, he rose slowly, drawing out his long, snake-like limbs, until he stood before them at his full and extraordinary height, a venerable and gaunt object, scarcely human at all.

"Out of pity for yourselves, sahibs have pity, for thy servant serveth no master but one," he said, speaking still in his insinuating monotone, and holding his little alms-bowl again before each man.

One and all the seven Englishmen went on smoking, or reading, or dozing, and took no notice of him.

He waited; slowly eyeing them, his inexhaustible patience seeming to linger with a sort of pity for them over this, their last, opportunity. Then, suddenly, the dirty little alms-bowl seemed somehow to vanish from the extended hand of the old man, and he raised his bare, long arm:

"The curse of Salii Lal Pal shall rest upon the head of every man in the door of this tent," said he slowly, in the same monotonous, yet incisive voice.

"To-night has the All-Merciful sent here to you his servant, and you bid him go from you with empty hands." He extended the shrivelled palms, and exhibited their bareness; and then, with a finger of his right hand, he counted the Englishmen.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven; the number of Judgment. Hear me now, sahibs, lords of this earth. Again in three years—three, the number of Fate—will I cross the paths that ye walk, and I will make inquiry for ye, and men shall tell me that from every one of ye Death hath taken what ye would not give to-night. It is the curse of Salii Lal Pal, the servant of the All-Merciful. He has spoken by His servant. His word goeth not back."

Before the Englishmen seemed to have finished hearing him the mysterious old man had vanished into the night.

"That's beastly grim and nasty on the part of the old gentleman," said the boy who had chaffed him, examining his pipe uneasily; "why didn't you let me shut his mouth up with a rupee, Colonel?"

"I hate to hear one of those old bags of mystery say a thing like that, myself," observed the man they called Bailey, very thoughtfully; "one hears stories so often from fellows about warnings like that coming true, somehow. They are not comfortable hearing; confound the old ghoul."

"What idiots you men are to take notice of such tomfoolery! If one of you now were to whistle the recall, the old buffoon would come out of his hiding and take an anna from Tommy, there, who was the prime offender, and who'll go first assuredly, when the curse begins to work. Tommy, he'd assure you a thousand years of life, even now, I'm convinced, for the consideration of double fees, only I'll not have the old hound brought back to add to your natural years one half-hour. Come, won't some of you men make up a rubber? That old ghoul isn't going to begin his work of destruction by spoiling our evening, I presume. Bailey, you ought to be seeing if Chuder has got Wilson's tiger skinned yet. The chap's morally convinced that the beast's ears are his lawful spoil, if there isn't someone to look after him."

II.

"Looks as if that old ghoul meant his evil words to come true," said Durward next day, when they carried into camp Wilson mortally injured in a gun accident. "Poor old Wilson, it's rough on him that he should have first turn."

And the party that returned to Burrapur went back only six men strong, not counting the servants who bore between them a melancholy something which once had been a living, hoping, pleasure-loving man.

For a while society in Burrapur was shadowed by the gloom of that mournful return, and everyone spoke nicely and feelingly concerning Wilson. Then the gay season of the place came on, and boiling seething water cannot retain on its surface the ripples of a splash, however big.

"Poor Wilson" ceased to be a topic of conversation, and if the dead man could have learned from the weird fakir that secret so profoundly hid of "how to come back and be forgiven," he might have found that the balance of pardons lay all on the wrong side, which he doubtless would have overlooked, having been a man who understood his world.

They play polo a great deal at Burrapur during the cool weather, and that season two very serious mishaps took place upon the polo ground.

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One man was killed on the spot, and another received a blow in a vital part, which, however, for the sake of everyone he made light of at the time.

He got invalided on account of it, by-and-bye, and went home to England, from whence, later on, came news of his death.

"I tell you, Barbour, I feel like a doomed man," said Tommy Durward, when reading his newspaper; "both those poor chaps were with us up in the camp, and heard the curse of that old fool. Look at that accident to Wilson, too! How he lay on the little camp-bed and watched us, and knew it was all up. Goodness knows now whose turn's got to come next."

"Hum—goodness knows, and goodness don't need to be helped out in its nasty tricks upon humanity by a dirty old heathen fakir."

"Don't talk that way, Barbour. I wish you wouldn't. I call it an uncommon awful thing to have to die——"

"You've got to, my dear chap."

"So've you, old boy; but not within three years, please God—that's a bit too soon for you or me," and Thomas Durward, Esq., of Her Majesty's Native Cavalry, looked desperately seriously out of his very blue eyes, and thought of a certain girl he knew. Perhaps he may have recalled the confident words of Barbour, and his round, jolly face, when the troop-ship carrying him home to England next spring struck in a fog upon the treacherous Portuguese coast, and, giving very little time for thought to anyone, settled down among the relentless breakers with nearly every hand on board.

"There's only three of us left now," said ungrammatic Tommy ruefully to the girl of his heart, recounting to her the story of the fakir's grim prophecy on the day when the news of the loss of the *Caspian* and Barbour's death reached Burrapur.

"I decline *positively* to be your widow, Tommy. You must live long enough to attend my funeral, and be my mourner, or I'll never, never have you, you silly boy," the girl protested, though Durward's story had started an uneasy sensation at her heart.

"Darling," Tom said, in a voice which signified everything, even to undertaking to fulfil these last offices for her, when the needful time arrived.

"You don't really believe it, Tommy? Not really? It's merely coincidence. You only tell me to tease me?"

"I don't believe anything ever, my Lilla, except that I love you, and can't live without you. I couldn't die ever, Lilla, if you were by, I think." Such very foolish young people were these.

It is needless to tell by what means the lives of old Colonel Howard or of the other surviving men were ended. Suffice it to say, that within the time limited by the fakir, there was promotion into their shoes for juniors of the regiment.

Meantime, the infatuated Tommy Durward was married, and apparently lost account of time.

It was only on the last night of the fatal three years that the recollection of the grim curse, which still might be said to hang over him, recurred to his mind.

He was at his club in Burrapur, and had to ride out half a mile or so to his bungalow and his wife.

"Good Heavens!" thought the young fellow, in an agonised way, as he suddenly noticed the date; "if there's any truth in that old heathen's prophecy, it'll come true to-night, and there's little Lilla at home."

"I'm going to ride a bit of the way out with you," said a friend to him, when he was mounting at the club-house door. "The air of the hills out your way'll be cool, perhaps, after the heat of a day like to-day."

"I'll be very glad of your company," Tommy said, and they trotted together out of the town and along the broad track of the moonlit road towards the hills in the direction of Durward's place.

The light was very clear and silver-like, and their horses were made a trifle nervous by the blackness of the shadows that were cast upon the road.

"Steady, there!" cried the man riding with Durward, for his animal had reared right upon its haunches till it almost lost its balance and fell back. It righted itself, however, and stood trembling and snorting with fear.

"What was it?" asked the man, appealing to his companion, as he thought the scuffling of horses' feet he had heard had been only those of his own mare. He looked, and Tommy Durward and his mount had disappeared. Then he urged his own terrified animal up the road; perhaps two hundred yards or more an unaccountable dark patch lay out in the midst of a flood of moonlight.

"Tommy—Tommy Durward, is that you?" He stopped, bent over and listened, and then dismounted in haste.

The curious thing about it was that Durward never felt any sensation of pain. He was acutely alive to all that went on around him, though his spine was dislocated, and his body paralysed.

"Gone, yes—over that way. It's no use going after him. He came to tell me the time was up. I'd had the longest of them all. Your mare was frightened, too. I knew what it meant when I saw him by the road-side. To-day was the last of those three years—and this is the end. Could you go and tell Lilla? It's not far from here. Don't frighten her; say it's only a little accident at first. But if she'd come here to me I might have a little longer time than if you tried to move me to her. No, I don't mind being left—only be quick. Once I told her I couldn't die if she were with me."

The man touched Durward's hand, and then was gone, and in less than a quarter of an hour came hastening back in company with a little, terror-stricken woman, with a shawl cast over her pretty evening dress.

When the little woman knelt down by Durward in the moonlight, very brave in her determination to control herself, she was his widow.

* * * * *

Thus did the fakir's curse come true, although there are people who tell us that such things are merely coincidence.

GERTRUDE M. HAYWARD.

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BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

SUMMARY OF THE PROLOGUE.

The prologue tells of the bridal of Vilcaroya and Golden Star, in the Sanctuary of the Sun in Cuzco, on the eve of the Spanish invasion and the fall of the Inca empire. It has been prophesied that when the sceptre of the Incas shall be grasped by the hand of one who has been dead, and is alive again, the ancient glories of their empire shall be restored. Golden Star, one of the sacred Virgins of the Sun, kneels at the foot of the altar and offers herself as the bride of him who will fulfil the prophecy. Vilcaroya swears for love of her to dare the ordeal. On the night of their bridal they are carried away to their secret resting place, and at the same time immense treasures are taken out of Cuzco and hidden against the time of their awakening.

BOOK I.

FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT.

CHAPTER I.

HIS HIGHNESS THE MUMMY.

"AH, what a thing it would be for us if his Inca Highness were really only asleep, as he looks to be. Just think what he could tell us—how easily he could re-create that lost wonderland of his for us, what riddles he could answer, what lies he could contradict. And then think of all the lost treasures that he could show us the way to. Upon my word, if Mephistopheles were to walk into this room just now I think I should be tempted to make a bargain with him. Do you know, Djama, I believe I would give half the remainder of my own life, whatever that may be, to learn the secrets that were once locked up in that withered, desiccated brain of his."

They were standing over a long packing-case.

The speaker was one of two men who were standing in a large room, half study half museum, in a big old-fashioned house in Maida Vale. Wherever the science of archæology was studied, Professor Martin Lamson was known as the highest living authority on the subject of the antiquities of South America. He had just returned from a year's relic hunting in Peru and Bolivia, and was enjoying the luxury of unpacking his treasures with the almost boyish delight that under such circumstances comes only to the true enthusiast. His companion was a somewhat slenderly built man, of medium height, whose clear, olive skin, straight black hair, and deep blue-black eyes betrayed a not very remote Eastern origin.

Dr. Laurens Djama was a physiologist, whose rapidly acquired fame—he was barely thirty-two—would have been considered sounder by his professional brethren if he had not been, as they thought, tarnished by excursions into bye-ways of science, which were believed to lead him perilously near to the borders of occultism. Five years before he had pulled the Professor through a very bad attack of the calentura in Panama, where they met by the merest traveller's chance, and since then they been fast friends.

They were standing over a long packing-case, some seven feet in length and two and a half in breadth, in which lay, at full length, wrapped in graveclothes that had once been gaily coloured, which were now faded and grey with the grave dust, the figure of a man with hands crossed over the breast, dead to all appearances, and yet so gruesomely life-like, that it seemed hard to believe that the broad, muscular chest over which the crossed hands lay was not actually heaving and falling with the breath of life.

The face had been uncovered. It was that of a man still in the early prime of life. The dull brown hair was long and thick, the features somewhat aquiline, the cheek-bones rather prominent, the skin of a pale bronze, though darkened by the hues of death. Yet every detail of the face was so perfect and so life-like that, as the Professor had said, it seemed to be rather the face of a man in a deep sleep than that of an Inca prince, who must have been dead and buried for over three hundred years. The closed eyes, though somewhat sunken in their sockets, were the eyes of sleep rather than of death, and the lids seemed to lie so lightly over them that it looked as though one awakening touch would raise them.

"It is beyond all question the most perfect specimen of a mummy that I have seen," said the Doctor, stooping down and drawing his thin nervous fingers very lightly over the dried skin of the right cheek. "On my honour I really can't believe that His Highness, as you call him, ever really went to the other world by any of the orthodox routes. If you could imagine an absolute suspension of all the vital functions induced by the influence of something, some drug or hypnotic process unknown to modern science, brought into action on a human being in the very prime of his vital strength, then, so far as I can see, the results of that influence would be exactly what you see here."

"But surely that can't be anything but a dream. How would it be possible to bring all the vital functions to a dead stop like that, and yet keep them in such a state that it might be possible—for that's what I suppose you are driving at—to start them into activity again just as one might wind up a clock that had been stopped for a few weeks and set it going once more."

"My dear fellow, the borderland between life and death is so utterly unknown to the very best of us that there is no telling what frightful possibilities there may be lying hidden under the shadows that are over it. You know as well as I do that there are perfectly well-authenticated

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instances on record of Hindoo Fakirs who have allowed themselves to be placed in a state of suspended animation and had their tongues turned back into their throats, their mouths and noses covered with clay, and have then been buried in graves that have been filled up and had sentries watching day and night over them for as long a period as six weeks, and then have been dug up and restored to perfect health and strength again in a few hours. Now, if life can be suspended for six weeks and then restored to an organism which, from all physiological standpoints, must be regarded as inanimate, why not for six years or six hundred years, for the matter of that? Given once the possibility, which we may assume as proved, of a restoration to life after total suspension of animation, then it only becomes a question of preservation of tissue for more or less indefinite periods. Granted the tissue can so be preserved, then, given the other possibility already proved, and—well, we will talk about the other possibility afterwards. Now, tell me, don't you, as an archæologist, see anything peculiar about this Inca prince of yours?"

The Professor had been looking keenly at his friend during the delivery of this curious physiological lecture. He seemed as though he were trying to read the thoughts that were chasing each other through his brain behind the impenetrable mask of that smooth, broad forehead of his. He looked into his eyes, but saw nothing there save a cold, steady light that he had often seen before when the Doctor was discussing subjects that interested him deeply. As for his face, it was utterly impassive, the face of a dispassionate scientist quietly discussing the possible solution of a problem that had been laid before him. Whether his friend was really driving at some unheard of and unearthly solution of the problem which he himself had raised, or whether he was merely discussing the possible issue of some abstract question in physiology he was utterly unable to discover, and so he thought it best to confine himself to the matter in hand without hazarding any risky guesses that might possibly result in his own confusion. So he answered as quietly as he could:

"Yes, I must confess that there are two perhaps very important points of difference between this and any other Peruvian mummy that I have ever seen or heard of."

"Ah, I thought so," said Djama, half closing his eyes and allowing just the ghost of a smile to flit across his lips. "I thought I knew enough about archæology and the science of mummies in general to expect you to say that. Now, just for the gratification of my own vanity, I should like to try and anticipate what you are going to say, and if I'm wrong, well, of course, I shall only be too happy to be contradicted."

"Very well," laughed the Professor; "say on."

"Well, in the first place I believe I'm right in saying that all Peruvian mummies that have so far been discovered have been found in a sitting posture, with the legs drawn close up to the body by means of bindings and burial clothes so that the chin rested between the knees, while the arms were brought round the legs and folded over them. Then, again, these mummies have always been found in an upright position while you found this one lying down."

"Quite so, quite so," said the Professor. "In fact, I may say that no one save myself has ever discovered such a mummy as this among all the thousands that have been taken out of Peruvian burying-places. And, now, what is your other point?"

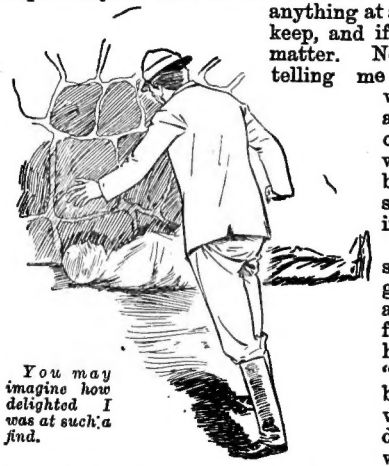
"Simply this," said Djama, kneeling down beside the case, and laying his hands over the abdomen of the recumbent figure. "In the case of all mummies, whether Egyptian or Peruvian, it was the invariable practice of the embalmers to take out the intestines and fill the abdominal cavity with preservative herbs and spices. Now, this has not been done in this case. Look here."

And deftly and swiftly he removed the dusty, half-decayed coverings from the body of the mummy while the Professor looked on half-wondering and half-frightened for the safety of his treasure.

"That has not been done here. You see the man's body is as perfect as it was on the day he died, to use a conventional term. Now, am I not right?"

"Yes, yes; perfectly right," answered the Professor, who felt himself fast losing his grip of the conversation which had taken so strange a turn. "But what has all this got to do with the most unique mummy that ever was brought from South America? Surely, in the name of all that's sacred, you don't mean——"

"My dear fellow, never mind what I mean for the present," replied Djama with another of his half smiles. "If I mean anything at all, the meaning will keep, and if I don't it doesn't matter. Now, do you mind telling me exactly how and where you came across this extraordinary specimen of, well, for want of a better term, we will say Inca embalming?"



You may imagine how delighted I was at such a find.

"Yes, willingly," said the Professor, glad to get back again on to the familiar ground of his own experiences. "I found it almost by accident in a little valley about four days' ride to the westward of Cuzco. I was on my way to Abancay across the Apurimac. My mule had fallen lame, and so I got belated. Night came on, and somehow we got off the track crossing one of the Punas—those elevated tablelands, you know, up among the mountains—and when the mule could go no farther we camped, and the next morning I found myself in an almost circular valley completely walled in by enormous mountains, save for the narrow, crooked gorge through which we had stumbled by the purest accident. The bottom of this gorge was filled by a little lake, and while I was exploring the shores of this I saw hidden underneath an overhanging ledge of rock a couple of courses of that wonderful mortarless masonry which the Incas alone seemed to know how to build. I had no sooner seen it than all desire of getting to Abancay or anywhere else had left me. I made my arriero turn the animals loose for the day, and then I sent him back to a village we had passed through the day before to buy more provisions and bring them to me.

"As soon as he had got out of sight I set to work to get some of the stones out and see what there was behind them. I knew there must be something, for the Incas never wasted labour. It was hard work, for the stones were fitted together as perfectly as the pieces of a Chinese puzzle; but at last I got one out and then the rest was easy. Behind the stones I found a little chamber hollowed out of the rock, perfectly clean and dry, and on the floor of this I found, without any other covering than what you see there, the mummy of his Highness lying on what had once been a bed of soft Vicuña skins, as perfect and as lifelike as though he had only crept in there twelve hours before and had laid down for a good night's rest.

"You may imagine how delighted I was at such a find. I hardly knew how to contain myself until my man came back. I put the stones back into their places as well as I could, and when José returned the next day I had the animals saddled up, and started off instantly back to Cuzco. There I had this case made, bought two extra mules, came back to the valley, packed up my mummy, took it back to Cuzco, and from there to the railway terminus at Sicuani

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and took it down by train to Arequipa, where I left it in safe keeping until I had finished the rest of my exploration. Then I went back, took it down to Mollendo, got it on board the steamer, and here it is."

"And you didn't find any traces of other treasure-places, I suppose, in the valley," said Djama, who had listened with the most perfect attention to the Professor's story.

"No, I didn't, though I must confess that one side of the cave in which I found this was walled up with the same kind of masonry as there was in front of it; but, to tell you the truth, the Peruvian Government has such insane ideas about treasure-hunting, and the life of a man who is believed to have discovered anything worth having is worth so little in the wilder districts of the interior, that I was afraid of losing the treasure that I had got, perhaps for the sake of a few gold ornaments that might have been dug out of the hill, that I decided to be content with what I'd found."

"H'm," said the Doctor. "Well, you may have been wise under the circumstances; I dare say you were. But we can see about that afterwards. Meanwhile there is something else to be talked about."

He stopped suddenly, took a quick turn or two up and down the room, with his hands clasped behind him and his eyes fixed on the floor. Then he went to the door, opened it, looked out, shut it and locked it, and then came back again and sat down without a word in his chair, staring steadily at the impassive face of the mummy in the packing-case.

CHAPTER II.

A Physiological Experiment.

"Why, what's the matter, Doctor?" said the Professor, a trifle sharply. "You don't suppose I am afraid of anyone coming to steal my treasure, do you?"

"My dear fellow," said Djama, looking him straight in the eyes, and speaking very slowly, as though his mind was doing something else besides shaping the thoughts to which he was giving utterance, "I don't for a moment suppose that there are thieves about, or that if there were any burglar with a competent knowledge of his profession would think of stealing your mummy, priceless as it may prove to be. I locked the door because I don't want to be interrupted. I want to talk to you about a very important matter."

"And that is?"

"Mephistopheles."

"What?"

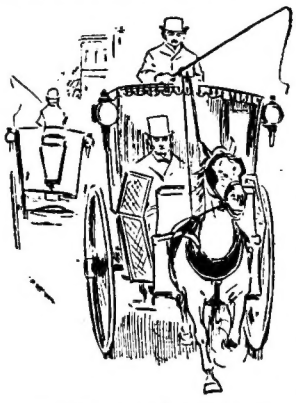
"Gently, my friend, gently, don't get excited yet. You will want all your nerves soon, I can assure you. Yes, I am quite serious. You know that in the good old days when people still believed in His Majesty of Darkness, such a speech as the one you remember making a short time ago was quite enough to call up one of his agents armed with full powers to make contracts and do all necessary business."

"Look here, Laurens, if you go on talking like that, I shall begin to think you have gone out of your mind."

"My dear fellow, to be quite candid with you, I don't care two pins what you think on that subject. I have been called mad too many times for that. Now, suppose, just for argument's sake, that I were Mephistopheles, and staked my diabolic reputation on the statement that in that thing you possess a possible key to those lost treasures of the Incas which ten generations of men have hunted for in vain, what kind of a bargain would you be inclined to make with me on the strength of it? Half the rest of your life, I think you said, and as that wouldn't be very much good to me, suppose we say the half of any treasures we may discover by the help of our silent friend there? Eh—will that suit you?"

"Are you really serious, Djama, or are you only dreaming another of these wild scientific dreams of yours?" exclaimed the Professor, taking a couple of quick strides towards him. "What connection can there possibly be between a mummy, some three hundred years old, and the lost treasures of the Incas?"

"This man was an Inca, wasn't he?" said the Doctor, abruptly, "and one of high rank, too, from what you have said. He lived just about the time of the Conquest, didn't he—the time when the priests stripped their temples, and the nobles emptied their palaces of their treasures to save them from the Spaniards. Is it not likely that he would know where, at any rate, a great part of them was buried? Nay, may he not even have known the localities of the lost mines that the Incas got their hundredweights of gold from, and of the emerald mines which no one has ever been able to find? Why, Lamson, if these dead lips could speak, I believe they could make you and me millionaires in an hour; and why shouldn't they speak?"



In a hansom and on his way to Kilburn.

"Don't talk like that, Djama, for Heaven's sake. It is too serious a thing to joke about," said the Professor, with a half-frightened glance in his set and shining eyes. "I should have thought you, of all men, knew enough of the facts of life and death not to talk such nonsense as that."

"Nonsense!" said the physiologist, interrupting him almost angrily; "may I not know enough of the facts of life and death, as you call them, to know that that is not nonsense? But there, it's no use arguing about things like this. Will you allow this mummy of yours to be made the subject of, well, we will say, an experiment in physiology?"

"What, the finest and most unique huaca that was ever brought to Europe——"

"It would only be made finer still by the experiment, even if it failed. I know what you are going to say, and I will give you my word of honour, and, if you like, I'll pledge you my professional reputation, that not a hair of its head shall be injured. Let me take it to my laboratory, and I promise you solemnly that in a week you shall have it back, not as it is now, but either the body of your Inca, as perfect as it was the day he died, or——"

He stopped, and looked hard at his friend, as if wondering what the effects of his next words would be upon him.

"Or what?" asked the Professor, almost in a whisper.

"Your Inca prince, roused from his three-hundred-year sleep, and able to answer your questions and guide us to his lost mines and treasure houses."

"Are you in earnest, Djama?" the Professor whispered, catching him by the arm and looking round at the mummy as though he half thought that the silent witness in the packing-case might be listening to the words which, if it could have heard, would have had such a terrible significance for it. "Do you really mean to say in sober earnest that there is the remotest chance of your science being able to work such a miracle as that?"

"A chance, yes," replied Djama steadily. "It is not a certainty, of course, but I believe it to be possible. Will you let me try?"

"Yes, you shall try," answered the Professor in a voice nothing like as steady as his. "If any other man but you had even hinted at such a thing, I would have seen him—well, in a lunatic asylum first. But there, I will trust my Inca to you. It seems a fearful thing even to attempt, and yet, after all, if it fails there will be no harm done, and if it succeeds—ah, yes, if it succeeds—it will mean——"

"Endless fame for you, my friend, as the re-creator of a

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lost society, and for both of us wealth, perhaps beyond counting. But stop a moment, granted success, how shall we talk with our Inca revenant? Have I not heard you say that the Aymaru dialect of the Quichua tongue is lost as completely as the Inca treasures?"

"Not quite, though I believe I am now the only white man on earth who understands it."

"Good! then let me get to work at once, and in a week—well, in a week we shall see."

The physiologist dined with the Professor that night, and the small hours were growing large before they ended the long talk which their strange bargain and the still stranger experiment which was to result from it formed the subject. The next day the packing-case containing the mummy was transferred to Djama's laboratory, and then for a whole week neither the Professor nor any other of his friends or acquaintances had either sight or speech of him.

Every caller at his house in Brondesbury Park was politely but firmly denied admittance on professional grounds, and three letters and two telegrams which the Professor had sent to him, after being himself denied admittance, remained unanswered.

At last, on the Thursday following the Friday on which the mummy had been sent to the laboratory, the Professor received a telegram telling him to come at once to the doctor. Three minutes after he had read it he was in a hansom and on his way to Kilburn, wondering what it was that he was to be brought face to face with during the next half hour.

This time there was no denial. The door opened as he went up the steps, and the servant handed him a note. He tore it open and read:

"Come round to the laboratory and make a new acquaintance who will yet be an old one."

His heart stood still, and he caught his breath sharply as he read the words which told him that the unearthly experiment for which he had furnished the subject had been successful.

The Doctor's laboratory stood apart from the house in the long, narrow garden at the back, and as he approached the door he stopped for a moment, and an almost irresistible impulse to go away and have nothing more to do with the unholy work in hand took possession of him. Then the love of his science and the longing to hear the marvels which could only be heard from the lips that had been dead and were now alive again overcame his fears, and he went up to the door and knocked softly.

Djama pulled aside a curtain

It was opened by a haggard, wild-eyed man, whom he scarcely recognised as his old friend. Djama did not speak, he simply caught hold of the sleeve of his coat with a nervous, trembling grasp, drew him in, shut the door, and led him to a corner of the room where there was a little camp bed, curtained all round with thin, transparent muslin, through which he could see the shape of a man lying under the sheets.

Djama pulled the curtain aside and said in a hoarse whisper:

"Look, it has been hard work, and terrible work, too, but I have succeeded. Do you see, he is breathing."

The Professor stared, wide-eyed at the white pillow on which lay the head of what, a week before, had been his mummy. Now it was the head of a living man; the pale bronze of the skin was clear and moist with the dew of life; the lips were no longer brown and dry, but faintly red and slightly parted, and the counterpane, which was pulled close up under the chin, was slowly rising and falling with the regular rhythm of a sleeper's breathing. He looked from the face of him who had been dead and was alive again to the face of the man whose daring science and perfect skill had wrought the unholy miracle, and then he shrank back from the bedside, pulling Djama with him, and whispering:

"Good God, it is even more awful than it is wonderful! How did you do it?"

"That is my secret," whispered Djama, his dry lips shaping themselves into a ghastly smile, "and for all the treasures that that man ever saw, I wouldn't tell it to a living soul, or do such hideous work again. I tell you I have seen life and death fighting together for two days and nights in this room—not, mind you, as they fight on a death-bed, but the other way, and I would rather see a thousand men die than one more come back out of death into life. You see, he is sleeping now. He opened his eyes just before day-break this morning, that's nearly ten hours ago, but if I lived ten thousand years I should never forget that one look he gave me before he shut them again. Since then he has slept, and I stood by that bed testing his pulse and his breathing for eight hours before I wired you. Then I knew he would live, and so I sent for you."

The Professor looked at his friend with an involuntary and unconquerable aversion rising in his heart against him; an aversion that was half fear, half horror, and then he remembered that he himself had a share in the fearful work which had been done, a work that could not now be undone without murder.

With another backward look at the bed, he said, in a whisper that was almost a smothered groan:

"When will he wake?"

Before Djama could reply, the question was answered by a faint rustle, and a low, long-drawn sigh from the bed. They looked and saw the Inca's face turned towards them, and two fever-bright eyes shining through the curtains.

"He is awake already, two hours sooner than I expected," said Djama, in a voice that he strove vainly to keep steady. "Come, now, you are the only man on earth who can talk to him. Let us see if he has come back to reason as well as to life."

"Yes, I will try," said the Professor faintly. He took a couple of trembling steps. Then the lights in the room began to dance, the whitewashed walls reeled round him, and he pitched forward and fell unconscious by the side of the bed.

(To be continued.)

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Lost, a Bag of Gold.

"ARE you engaged, coachman?"

I had stopped at that moment to water my horse, and to quench my own thirst in a tavern near. I had scarcely reached my horse's head, when I heard the above question, and saw, as I turned round, a young lady standing by the side of my cab. Without delay I answered, and, opening the door, I helped the lady in.

Her face had a certain hesitating, timid expression, which made me judge that my fare was not an independent lady, but a housekeeper or a governess. She wore a black silk dress and a woollen shawl. Her hands and feet were small, but it did not escape me that her gloves were very much worn.

I asked her where she wished to be taken. She named a locality not of the best, and with a trembling voice, as if ashamed of it. I climbed on the box, and whipped up. Although it was nothing to me where my fare wished to go, I felt a sort of curiosity as to who and what the lady might be. I had observed that she seemed to have a pretty face, although the veil that she wore over it did not let me see her features plainly. During the trip I was driven by my curiosity to peep through the cab window behind me, and saw that she had put up her veil. She looked frightfully pale and thin. Her skin was like wax, and one did not need to be a doctor to know that she was consumptive.

She held in her hands something on which her eyes were fixed, and there came over her face an expression of thankfulness and satisfaction. What the object was I could not tell exactly. I only saw that it was light-coloured, and had no decided shape. I had only two seconds for my observation. I had to see to my horse in the crowded street.

I gave him a lash with the whip, and at a quick trot we soon arrived at the part of the city indicated. As soon as I found the number which the lady had given me, I stopped, got off the box, and opened the door to help her out. She appeared to be in great agitation, as if an unpleasant interview was before her. I received from her over the price of her fare, which she evidently knew, an extra tip, thanked her, and she hurried away, while I turned my carriage towards a neighbouring public-house to invest immediately in a glass of beer.

But before I went in I proceeded to straighten the cab cushions, and see that all was right inside. As soon as I opened the door again I saw some object lying on the seat. It was a small linen bag—without doubt what the lady had held in her lap. I took it in my hand, and its weight astonished me. With not a little curiosity I looked at it again and again, and at last tried to open it. It was easily done, for the bag was fastened only by a little piece of string.

One can imagine my surprise when I found that it was filled with gold pieces! I dared not look at them further in this place, as a policeman might possibly notice, and ask how I came by the gold. Meanwhile, I tied the bag up again, and put it in the wide pocket of my coat. Instead of indulging myself in the glass of beer, I drove to the nearest cab-stand, and took my place in the rear of the line of cabs, so that I could be sure of not being wanted for the next half hour.

I got into my cab, as cabmen often do when they want a little rest, and I examined for the second time my new-found treasure. I shook the contents of the bag on the seat, and sat with dazed eyes before quite a pile of gold.

After delighting my eyes with it for a while, I counted the money, partly half, partly whole sovereigns, singly, again into the bag, and found that it amounted to exactly the sum of £150.

I could not think otherwise than that this money belonged to the pale young lady whom I had last carried. How she came by it, and what she was going to do with it, was another thing. I had found it, and it was a great temptation to me to keep it. What could I not undertake with such capital? I could buy myself a cab and horses, and instead of being a miserable hired cabman, would myself own cabs, or establish a livery-stable, which would make me independent.

The picture of the future, which I painted in this way, was alluring enough, but along with it was the consideration that I should be a thief if I retained the money. My selfishness had a severe struggle with my conscience.

While I now looked more closely at the bag, I found, written in ink upon it, the address, "Miss Mildred Berkeley, No. 4, Bentley Place." This address, which had hitherto escaped me, I read with as much disgust as astonishment; for there now remained to me, as an honourable man, but one way. I meditated over it a time, but could come to no conclusion. "With honesty," said one voice in my soul, "you will earn no bread; with honesty you can go, in your old age, to the poor-house."

At last selfish interest and conscience came to a compromise, and I resolved to keep the money till the following day. Then, I thought, there will be a reward offered, and no one can blame me for at least profiting by that.

I remained all day in a fever of excitement; and, when night came, I felt really ill. I could not sleep. Next morning I was pale and wretched. I went to breakfast where cabmen are in the habit of drinking their coffee, and eagerly looked for the morning paper. Sure enough, at the top of the column for lost and found articles, I found this advertisement:

LOST. Yesterday, in a cab, a bag of gold. The finder is earnestly entreated to bring the money to No. 7, Grattan Street, three flights up, where he will receive a liberal reward.

I knew well what this last passage signified, for I had already in many cases learned that this common expression allowed great latitude. A liberal reward meant perhaps from one to five shillings and a glass of beer. That would be fine amends for resigning £150.

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I went about all day with the bag in my pocket like a madman, which made me once or twice nearly run over people. My night's rest was disturbed by phantoms, and the morning brought me no relief. I felt miserable, and, what was worse, even in my waking hours the phantoms did not fade from my eyes.

To my great surprise the advertisement was not repeated. I could not explain it to myself, but began to fear that the police were on my track, and that some fine day I must walk into prison.

A week passed, and I had become a mere shadow of the strong, healthy man I had previously been. I could reproach myself only with not having returned the bag to its owner. I had not taken a penny of its contents.

Strangely enough, I had during this time unusual good luck. My cab was always occupied, and I earned a good deal of money. When I reflected on this fact, I believed that Providence thereby gave me a plain hint. The result was that on the tenth day I came to the resolution to return the lost property. The money had become a burden to me ever since I stretched my hand out towards it. I had had no rest by night or day; I felt weak and wretched.

I had noted the address given in the advertisement, and so I drove at noon on the tenth day to 7, Grattan Street. It was the place where I had driven the young lady. The door stood wide open. I called a boy to hold my horse, and went up the stairs. I asked a girl I met for Miss Berkeley, and she thought that such a person lived on the attic floor. I went up higher, and knocked at the door I presumed to be the right one. I could not help feeling that I had been a rascal, and only the consciousness that I was at last going to do right gave any ease to my conscience.

At my knock a weak voice called, "Come in!" I opened the door and entered.

For a moment the darkness prevented my seeing the interior. The windows were dim with dust, smoke, and dirt, and some broken panes were pasted over with paper. A table and two chairs, with a miserable bed, made the whole furniture.

"Step softly; Death is here," said a trembling voice, in which I only too well recognised the young lady whom I had brought there ten days before. But how she had changed in this short time! Her cheeks were hollow, her face was pale as death, and her eyes had an unusual brightness.

When I had gained the necessary self-command, I said, with my face turned away, for it was impossible for me to look on myself as other than a cowardly villain:

"I bring the bag of gold which——" and then I muttered something about having only just seen the notice.

"It is too late!" she whispered sadly, "he for whom that money was destined is no longer living. Here he lies. He died some hours ago. Yesterday you could have saved him—saved us both—but now it is too late, too late!"

And she went on murmuring to herself, "too late, too late," as if she had fallen into a stupor.

Suddenly the poor woman rose slowly from the chair where she sat by the death-bed, and, after walking up and staring at me, gave a hollow cry, which thrilled me to the marrow of my bones.

"It is only right that you should know what you have to answer for," she said, "that is your work; you can be proud of it, it has been a complete success."

She laughed wildly—it was more a mingling of laughing and crying—and looked at me.

"He was my husband," she went on, after a while; "we lived apart; why and wherefore is nothing to you. For five years I heard nothing of him. During this time I lived out as a governess, and earned that money which you hold in your hand. May God forgive you for what you have done!"

"At last he found me," she continued weakly, "and wrote, begging me to return to him. I came. He lived in this hole in sickness and poverty. Had I not lost my gold then I would have taken him away and cared well for him. He died of hunger. We have had no food for the last three days, and there is no other fate for me but to follow him. Oh, you have done a manly deed! Look there—your work!"

She drew a cloth from the face of the corpse; it looked almost a skeleton, and the sorrow of the sight overpowered her. She threw herself over it, and sobbed violently.

The emotion brought on a terrible fit of coughing. Her disease had gone too far for her to survive the shock of her husband's death, and if she could not die in his arms, she died by his side.

Terrified, I spread the sheet over the two dead forms, and hurried to call the landlady. I still held the gold in my hand. It seemed to burn like fire, and I would have hurled it from me if I had not a duty to fulfil. The landlady was very indifferent about the fate of the unfortunate pair. She merely said that nothing different had been expected, but was much pleased when I asked what they owed, and proceeded to pay her.

I went to an undertaker, and arranged with him for a fitting funeral for the couple united in death. I could not and would not seek for their friends and relatives to draw suspicion upon myself. It was now clear to me why the advertisement for the loss of the money appeared but once. The poor souls had not the means to pay for a repetition.

I followed the coffins to the grave. No stone marks it; but I know it well, and it often follows me in my dreams.

The very next day I drove to the Hospital for Consumptives, and put the rest of the bag of gold in the collection box, for I would rather have died of hunger than have kept a penny of it. W. H. H.

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AFTER MANY MONTHS

WHEN I first met Owen Johnson he had not long come to London, and the iron of disappointment had not entered into his soul. For some time he had contributed short stories to the weekly journal in the little Devonshire town where he had been brought up. They had not been paid for, I gathered from him, and his friends, imbued with the idea that he had in him the making of a journalist, had counselled him to try his luck in London.

He had some small means of his own, which was a good thing, as although the editor of the local organ had been good enough to give him a letter of introduction to the editor of a somewhat obscure London weekly, it had not resulted in his obtaining more than very occasional employment; not enough, indeed, to keep him, and he was always on the look out for other openings for his literary productions.

To give him his due, he was an indefatigable worker, and writing came naturally to him; but somehow he lacked the all-important knowledge of how to suit the critical taste of the average London editor, the result being that almost every post brought him back a more or less bulky MS. with the usual formula, "declined with thanks."

Shortly after our first acquaintance he wanted to change his apartments, and there happening to be a "combined" bed and sitting-room to let in the house in which I was then living, I suggested that it might suit him to take it, and that we could live together, an idea that he cordially assented to, and from mere friends we quickly became intimate associates.

Before long I learnt from him all there was to tell about himself and his belongings. Left an orphan at an early age, he and his sister had been brought up by an uncle in the West of England, and when the time came for him to go out into the world and seek his own living, a berth had been found for him in a large warehouse. But the work was always distasteful to him, his desire being to embark upon the precarious undertaking of journalism, and that he had succeeded in a modest way I have already stated. Whether he would ever make sufficient by his pen to support himself and his sister, who, he informed me, was a confirmed invalid, seemed doubtful, and I often did my best to persuade him to relinquish the idea and go back to commercial life.

On one occasion, indeed, the opportunity having unexpectedly offered itself, I was in a position to obtain him a berth in a city firm, at a salary which was considerably higher than his average earnings had been during the few months we had known each other. I suggested that by accepting it he might still in his spare time devote himself to literary work, and then, if the latter increased sufficiently to justify such a step, he might discard the former.

He was very grateful to me for the offer, and I half hoped would see his way to entering the situation, but, after a night's reflection, he said he had become convinced he could never again submit to the drudgery of office work, and that having once relinquished it he would not again attempt it, but stick to his pen in another direction.

As if to justify his determination, that very morning's post brought him a proof—a most unusual occurrence—of a sketch he had written for one of the numerous "family" journals now circulating in London and elsewhere.

His face beamed with excitement as he saw what it was, and he felt sure, he said, it was only the prelude of further successes in the same direction—a wish that was unfortunately not to be fulfilled.

Weeks went on, and, with the exception of one or two minor contributions being accepted by a friendly editor, who had taken a liking to the lad, and given him any little thing to write whenever he could, his literary aspirations remained unfulfilled.

Being myself employed in the City all day, we saw nothing of each other until the evening, but our landlady—a good soul, albeit somewhat loquacious—gave me to understand that my friend had spent almost the entire days in writing, hardly stopping to take his meals. He did not tell me so himself—in fact, he had become more than usually reserved just about this period—and I, knowing his disposition, did not attempt to draw his secret from him. My idea was that he was probably writing a longer story than usual—a shilling shocker, possibly—and that when it was finished he would tell me all about it.

As it happened, my surmise was partially, but not entirely, correct. At the end of a month, one evening on my return from business, it was evident he had something important to convey to me.

"Any good news to-day?"

"Yes, I've done it—done it at last. I meant to tell you two or three times, but I put it off, and put it off, and now it is done at last, and here it is," at the same time showing me a bulky roll of foolscap.

"One, two, or three volumes?" I asked laughingly.

"Guess again."

"A storyette?"

"No; a play. Ah! I thought you would be surprised. The fact is," he continued hurriedly, "I feel I am capable of attempting better work than I have been doing, and it has always been my ambition to write a play; something real, that will appeal to the sympathies of an audience, and not merely a story to be read in ten minutes, cast aside, and forgotten."

"And where have you gone to for your plot and incidents, may I ask?"

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"Where? Here—here in London. The few short months I have been up here I have heard and seen things I little dreamt of before, and I have done my best to weave some of them into a play such as will, I hope, commend itself to the notice of some theatrical manager."

"I don't want to dishearten you, but I have always heard it is extremely difficult to get a manager to look at a play by an unknown writer. There is a glut of plays in the market, they always say."

"Ah, but there is a human interest in my work, which I feel must make itself felt. It is not imagination; it is reality, what I have seen and heard, and it is a picture of life as it is, as it actually exists here in London, not as it is supposed to."

"Have you any idea as to where to place it?"

"That's just it," delightedly. "I have not written it altogether on spec, as it were. The Editor of the *Weekly Buzzer* told me a month ago he knew one or two managers who were looking out for a play dealing with incidents of London life, not down east—that has been done to death, he says—nor the fashionable West-end; but a something between the two, an admixture of the dull respectability of the suburbs, the thievish rascality of the city, and the foibles of the aristocracy."

"You have allowed yourself plenty of scope, at all events."

"That's the beauty of it. My play will not appeal to any individual section; it will be of general interest, and I have a presentiment of its success, somehow."

"What do you say, now, if I light a pipe, and you read it over to me."

"No, Charley, anything but that; my ambition is for it to come upon you as a surprise. I want you to be in front the night it comes out. Ah! I see you smile. But it will come out, it must, it shall," he added vehemently, with a strange look in his eyes, that made me regard him with a feeling of dismay. The idea entered my head that he had overworked himself, and that his mind was beginning to give way.

Evidently he divined what was passing through my mind, for in an altogether different tone of voice, he went on:

"It may seem very ungenerous of me, but I can't help it. When I first began to write, my idea was to read over each act—it's in three acts—as I finished it, but as I went on I made up my mind I would wait till it was finally completed, and give you a surprise; and then I changed my mind again, and thought it would be best to keep it until the night. I haven't said a word to Lily about it even, and I want her to see it first in the papers. I hope the critics won't be too severe on me, that's all."

Seeing the confident frame of mind he was in, it seemed a shame to attempt to disillusionise him, and I began to talk about his sister, a never failing source of conversation between us.

"It is not for myself I care so much, you know; it's for her I want this play to be a success. She writes me as cheerful as usual, but my aunt says her cough continues troublesome, and the doctor says the South of France would be the best place for her. Do you know, I have a kind of a feeling that if my play is accepted—and it must be," he added, in the vehement tone he had used before—"it will be mainly due to her. It may be a strange thing to say, but if it had not been for her I could never have written it. The desire to take her away to a warmer clime seemed to inspire my thoughts in some way, and if it wasn't for her I should not be so sanguine about its acceptance as I am. My friend the editor advised me to try Mr. A—— first. 'He has a partiality,' he says, 'for plays dealing with present day life and incidents.' Would you try and see him or send it by post?" he inquired, anxiously.

"Perhaps the latter would be the best plan; you see he is a very busy man."

"I quite agree with you; I'll post it to-night."

In less than a week it came back with the usual stereotyped reply, "declined with thanks."

To my surprise, Johnson was not a bit disheartened. "He doesn't know what he is throwing away," was his remark, with a smile.

Poor boy, I felt he had not exactly hit the right nail on the head; but in view of his fatuous enthusiasm, I had not the heart to tell him so in so many words.

Once again it was sent forth, only to meet the same reception; and so it went on, but he never lost heart, only after a time he altered his tactics and used to wait on managers and attempt to induce them to see him. In most cases he was unsuccessful, although now and again he found one more complacent than the rest. But in every instance the result was the same, his play was not accepted. It was, they admitted, not without merit; but it was crude, over-burdened with action and incident, and in fact would not do at all.

Continual disappointments at last began to tell upon him. He did not actually become despondent, but he confided to me that perhaps he had been too ambitious; it would have been better had he commenced in a smaller way—a one-act play, a curtain raiser, what did I think of it? Several managers had told him there was power in his work. Would I advise him to try again?

I replied that a short play might reasonably be expected to stand a better chance of acceptance than a more ambitious effort. More I did not feel justified in saying.

"I think you are right. I'll have another try; and, do you know, it would be more convenient to me to be nearer the theatres. One never knows what may turn up; and although I shall be very sorry to leave here, where I have been so comfortable, still, I must go, and shall give a week's notice to-day. I shall look you up sometimes, you know, and tell you how I am getting on."

"Poor boy," I said to myself, "so it has come to that, has it?" feeling that a cheaper lodging was his real motive for moving more than anything else. I would gladly have offered him pecuniary help, but I knew him well enough to be sure it would not be accepted.

A week later he left, promising to send me his new address. He did not do so, however, and it was nearly ten days before I saw him. I was struck with his altered appearance. He was pale, and looked ill.

"You have been overworking yourself, I'm afraid."

"Oh, I don't know. I have been sticking to it pretty close. I have taken your advice and written a short play—one-act this time—and Mr. B—— promised to let me know to-morrow if it will do."

"I hope his answer will be favourable."

"Well, I'm not so sanguine as I used to be, but I gave him an outline of the plot, and he said he thought it might do. I'm to know to-morrow, and if it does I will meet you coming away from the office."

The next day I saw him coming towards me, his face radiant with delight.

"It's all right, and it is to come out as soon as possible."

"Well, let me be the first to congratulate you; and now come along and let's have dinner together."

Was it my fancy? or did he devour his food with the avidity of a man to whom regular meals had not been the rule of late?

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By the time the meal was over he had become communicative. "Do you know, if it hadn't come off soon, I should have had to look for something to do, my finances have run down almost to vanishing point"—with an attempt at a laugh.

"You won't mind what I am going to say, will you?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, if two or three pounds would be any good just till you are paid, you know. You will be having some extra expenses I dare say."

"You are very good, and I could repay you in a week or two. My little play goes into rehearsal at once, and it will come out in about a fortnight's time, but I have managed somehow so far, and I won't forestall my inheritance now, many thanks all the same. I shall be busy attending rehearsals until then, so don't expect to see me again till it is all over. But you will come and see it, won't you?"

"See it! of course I will; and see you bow your acknowledgments to the audience, I hope."

A week later I got a post card bearing an address in Westminster, briefly announcing that his play would be produced on the following Wednesday.

Needless to say I booked a seat, and was in my place in good time.

The little play was an undoubted success; there was a freshness and originality about the plot that charmed the audience, and at the fall of the curtain on an extremely effective and well-arranged "curtain," their were loud cries for "Author, Author!" The heavy curtain was moved aside, and I looked forward to seeing my friend appear and receive, at last, his well-earned reward. In his place, however, came the manager, who announced briefly that the author was not in the house, but that the friendly reception accorded to his play should be duly conveyed to him.

A strange feeling of presentiment of something being wrong with my friend came over me. Hurrying out of the theatre I jumped into a cab, telling the man to drive me to his lodgings in Westminster. My acquaintance with the locality was nil, but after driving through a network of streets, my jehu stopped at No. 123, which, to my surprise, proved to be a tenement lodging-house of the lowest class. A slatternly woman stood in the doorway, and eyed me with suspicion.

"Is Mr. Johnson in?"

"Ain't no such name here."

"But there must be," I replied, producing his post card, and proceeding to describe his appearance.

"Oh, 'im, is it? You'll find him hup stairs in the top attic, unless he's gone hout. My gal took a tellygral to him just now. Didn't you, Liz?"

"Yus," said a smaller edition of the slatternly individual.

"May I go up and see him, please?"

"Certainly; and as he've got such fine friends, maybe I'll see the colour of my money some day."

Not noticing the remark, I proceeded hurriedly upstairs. "The top attic I think you said," I shouted back.

"Yus; number twenty-one on the door."

Hastily I opened the door. "Why, man, it's a gigantic succ——." The word was not finished. Seated on a broken chair, at an old rickety table, was my friend, with an open telegram in his clenched hand—dead!

Mechanically I read the telegram: "Your sister much worse. Come at once."

To summon the landlady was the work of an instant, and from her I learnt the truth. My poor friend must have been sadly pinched for means. He owed two weeks rent, and I gathered that for days he had been practically without food. The terrible message he had in his hand completed the work lack of proper nourishment had effectually commenced.

In the evening papers next day were two items of intelligence that to me possessed a sad significance. The one was a most favourable review of a new one-act play by an unknown author, and the other an account of an inquest held that afternoon on the body of Owen Johnson, the verdict of the jury being "Death from failure of the heart's action, accelerated by want of proper food." And this after many months!

Peter Parr.

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FROM MURPHY'S DOWN TO ANGEL'S

We had ridden three hours with a stupid stage-driver, and I was chagrined and disappointed. I had engaged the front seat two weeks in advance, and, being a Britisher, had expected to have a chance to study one of the old-time stage-drivers on his native heath; but, though it was said he had been on the route twenty years, he simply chewed a quid of tobacco and could not be induced to talk. An occasional grunt of assent or dissent was the most he vouchsafed us, and it was with a feeling of relief we changed stages at Murphy's and had another driver.

The drive from Murphy's to Angel's is over fifteen miles of dusty, uninteresting road, and we had not looked forward to the prospect with pleasure; but our new driver had an air of business and a looseness of tongue that were very refreshing after the mummified silence of the other man, and promised well for our entertainment. The native Americans seemed to see this as well as I.

Then, too, we saw that we had made a mistake about our first driver. The second man was, of course, the old stager, with his many thrilling adventures and hair-breadth escapes, while the first man was evidently a novice in the business. We took our seats and prepared ourselves for a most interesting time.

"Hope you're all comfortable, ladies?" began our second man, in a manner very different from the other gruff bore. "I do like mighty well to have ladies in the front seat with me; but I'm quite a fav'rite with the ladies, it seems—they always want the front seat."

"Oh, I see, you are the old stage-driver!" I exclaimed, "and you will tell us some of your interesting stories. How lovely. What is your name?"

"My real name—no matter; but they all call me Tennessee up here. You see, I come from Tennessee, an' I've got the southern twang, an' when I first come I talked a heap 'bout my native state, an' bragged some, too, I guess, coming from the south, you know, an' the boys like to twit a fellow; but I've travelled round so much that I've lost most of my twang—knocked 'bout considerable in my day. Fellow can't help rubbing on some polish, you know—I expect that's why I'm such a fav'rite with the ladies. It's real funny how all the old maids get stuck on me, an' the widders, too," Tennessee chuckled. "By jimminy cricketts! Ex—cuse *me*, if I get off a swear-word now an' then—I don't know which is the worst, old maids or widders." (I took a sly glance at my companion, who was a young and pretty widow who lived in San Francisco.) "I'm writing a book on my experience with the women."

"Why," said the little widow, "I should think you would get married, with so many to choose from."

"Well, it does seem that way. You see, I did try it onst. I'm a widderer—got sons over twenty years old—wouldn't believe it, now, would you? Most people take me to be 'bout thirty. I'm by rights over forty; but, great Jupiter, whipstitch—ex—cuse *me*, we old stagers can't help a little profanity—I wouldn't have any trouble marrying. I most always propose to the women before I get them through!" (My pretty companion began to look alarmed.) "The women like it—particular the widows. Now, we're coming to a little down grade. Got on a pretty heavy load, so guess we'll take it easy. Go 'long there, Suse—Nick, you old rack-a-bones!"

We rounded the brow of the hill, and the horses began the steep descent with a gentle trot; but within a few seconds their speed had accelerated to a hard gallop. The old Concord coach rolled from side to side, and we seemed in danger of upsetting, but our time had not yet come, and we reached the level road in safety. The widow and I were gazing at Tennessee with admiration. How fearless he was! What splendid driving! But a timid man on the back seat was first to recover his speech.

"I think you had better use your brake, driver," he said, in a querulous voice; "that driving was altogether too fast for a heavy coach."

"Listen to that old duffer," said Tennessee, *sotto voce*. "Guess he's never seen a hill before." Then he raised his voice. "Well, I will try," he said calmly, glancing back. "Why, the brake's gone!" he exclaimed.

We all looked at the rear wheels in dismay. The brake was gone in truth.

"Well, we'll have to go back—that's plain," said the timid man.

"What! pull up that hill?" said Tennessee, with disgust; "not if I know myself, and I think I do. We'll just plough through, old man. I never had an accident in my life. Why, last week I had twelve people on board—two women an' a kid here in front, an' one of the front wheels rolled off right on this down grade, an' rolled a hundred yards down the road, an' we just settled down kind of comfortable like, an' I never spilled a person or broke a screw. Oh, I'll get you through safe, you can rest on that."

We were trotting along at a lively rate, and I glanced nervously at the heavy axles. I hoped devoutly that the wheels were secure.

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Tennessee continued his talk with the most nonchalant air, as if brakes and wheels and things of that kind were of minor consideration.

"This house we are coming to is the only post-office between Murphy's and Angel's," he said. "Nice little woman keeps it—mighty sweet on me—plucky, too, I can tell you."

We drew up at the door, and a kindly-faced woman came out with the post-bag. She gave us a little nod of greeting, and retreated modestly into the doorway. Two or three tow-headed children peeped out from behind her skirts at the stage people.

"The schoolma'am's going down this morning," said the postmistress.

"We're pretty well loaded," said Tennessee.

I thought so, too, and wondered where we would put the schoolmistress; but Tennessee seemed equal to any emergency. He started the horses.

"Good-morning to you, ma'am," he called to the woman, and wafted a kiss from the tips of his fingers, presumably to the children, but I thought with intention to show us how he managed these things with the ladies. A few rods beyond we stopped, and a sunburnt girl came out.

"Good-morning," she called, in a fresh, clear voice, "have you room for me?"

"Oh, yes," answered the obliging Tennessee, "always room for one more. Got any trunks?"

"Yes; two," and she glanced apologetically at two enormous Saratogas which stood just by the door.

We wondered where they would be put, but Tennessee never hesitated. The trunks were placed somewhere in the back, and our driver sprang nimbly into his seat again. We started off at a brisk trot, and Tennessee launched forth in a string of thrilling narrative.

"See that hole over there?" he said. "A friend of mine dug out three thousand dollars in one day there. He wants to sell the mine now. I'm the agent. I tell you that I get more of that sort of thing than I can attend to. Why, I make more than four times my wages just selling out claims. Don't want to buy a claim now, do you? No? Well, there's something more interesting than claims—for a paying business beats claims all hollow—that's stage robbing. See that tree over yonder? That's where I was held up last time—robber didn't get anything, though. That's onst when he miscalculated."

I looked about quickly. We were now in a dusty wilderness of pine and chapparal. Not a sign of human habitation near. Tennessee saw my nervous glance.

"Mighty lonesome-looking now, ain't it? See them bullet holes in my stage cover? Them was put in when we were attacked by six road-agents over here by Joaquin Murietta's old home."

I felt my blood run cold. I had not seen the bullet holes before. The timid man gave vent to an audible "Ah!" and the others preserved an awe-struck silence.

"Why," continued Tennessee, "I guess every stone an' tree has hid its road-agent some time or other 'long here. I've had fifteen or twenty holds-ups, an' that's nothing compared with some of the old-timers."

"Do you think there is any danger at this particular time?" inquired the timid man.

"Why, that's hard to tell," said Tennessee dubiously. "It was just here where we had that last hold up two months ago, an' one of the passengers an' two of the road-agents was killed. The papers never got the straight of that. You see, it was that hold-up which showed me that the little widder postmistress was stuck on me.

"I was coming along here that day—had on a Wells-Fargo shot-gun messenger and a lot of passengers. There was about a hundred thousand dollars in bullion under the seat, an' the messenger held a loaded gun in his hand all the time. When we got just 'bout here coming up the hill, I saw the bushes move right there, an' I said, kinder under my breath, 'road-agents!' I whipped out my pistol, an' the messenger aimed his gun; but, Lord! who do you think it was? Why, the little postmistress back there. We came nigh shooting her. She looked frightened nigh to death, an' was white as a ghost.

"'Don't shoot,' she said, kinder soft like. 'Four men are going to rob the stage. I heard them planning it. They want to stop you before you git to the top of the grade, but if you hurry, you'll get there first, and maybe can git away on the down grade. Good-bye, and be quick,' an' she got out of sight in a twinkling. Done that for me, you see. We never waited to thank her. That's one thing I object to in these here mountains—you've got to sacrifice politeness sometimes.

"Well, I just gave my horses a cut, an' they jumped forward. That plucky little woman got out of sight pretty quick—had a horse, I guess. Well, we got to the top of the hill first, an' by Jupiter snupgrass!—excuse *me*, I always use strong language when I git excited—right on the other side was four masked men a-coming it up the hill as hard as they could tear."

There was a breathless silence on the stage coach. The horses were pulling up that very hill, and there was a possibility that we would be held up, too. Tennessee was getting a quid of tobacco. He kept us hanging breathless on his words until he had the morsel well rolled into his cheek.

"The first glimpse they caught of us they jumped behind trees an' called 'Halt!' but we were on the brow of the hill, an' I was prepared. I'd fastened the reins 'round my waist, an' guided with one hand while I used the other for my sixshooter. The messenger shouted 'Let her go!' It was just here, ladies—we left two men stretched out. I killed two road-agents, an' wounded another. The shooting scared the horses, or I think I'd have finished all four. That durned messenger—excuse *me*—was so scared that he shot one of my horses. Not used to the biz, you see. Of course, the horses stampeded—it's bad enough to hear the firing without being peppered by an unresponsible man who is frightened into next week.

"Well, they started on the dead run down the grade, an' I had to drop my pistol and hang on to the lines. I tell you, we buzzed round them turns—sometimes two wheels standing off the grade to onst. When we reached the bottom of the hill down at the station, the old hoss dropped dead, an' the people on the stage just come up to me a-crying an' a-thanking me for saving their lives, and took on turruble.

"Look!—at that rock," he ejaculated. We gazed with startled eyes in the direction indicated. "Oh, I guess it's all right this time, but I always expect to have a man step out from behind that rock—finest place to rob a stage in the country. Two men held me up there about fifteen years ago, when I first began to drive here—didn't get anything, though. Now, we're past. Guess that's a sigh of relief, ain't it? This is a mighty dangerous country 'bout here, but I guess I'll git you through, ladies. Don't you fear. If we git attacked, just keep still—keep perfectly cool 'an ca'm an'

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you probably won't get more than two or three scattering shots."

We were all frightened by this time. The little schoolmistress on the back held her peace, but the rest of us were looking about nervously, and trusting our lives to this wonderful Tennessee. The pretty widow was no longer haughty and distant, but at every noise in the bush grasped the brawny arm of the driver and looked appealingly into his face.

"Now, ladies, when we start down this mountain, we are on the home-stretch to Angel's. Just one mile more, I always feel glad when we pass this knoll. Joaquin Murietta held me upright here the first month I was on the road. I had five miners on board, an' they showed fight, an' they got the worst of it, too. I just held my horses an' kept cool. Indiscretion is no kind of valour, you know. Well, Murietta strung up every one of them five miners to a tree, an' told me to go into Angel's an' say that Tennessee was the only man about with any sense, an' for other people to take warning. That's the old tree over there, an' there's the ropes yet. See them right there."

We instinctively glanced in the direction indicated by the whip which Tennessee held outstretched in his right hand, and there were the ropes still dangling from a thick branch which overhung the road.

"Oh, do drive on fast—do drive on!" we all exclaimed shudderingly.

"Well, I guess we'll have to go on, an' pretty fast, too. The horses can't hold back much on this down grade. If we turn over, ladies, I guess it will be on my side, so just be prepared to swing yourselves out."

Down we started. In a few seconds the horses were trotting, and in a few seconds more they were galloping. Five badly-frightened people hung on in desperation to the seats, and the pretty widow hung to the arm of Tennessee. His feet were braced against the dashboard, and his body was stiffened out as he hung on to the taut lines.

Swinging, bumping, pitching, we careered down the long hill, and went tearing into the little mining camp of Angel's.

We drew up with a flourish at the door of the primitive hotel, and fairly fell into the arms of Tennessee, who had sprung to the ground to receive us.

Six thankful, admiring people stood in the tiny hotel parlour awaiting the next stage, and asking the driver of the present one what he'd have to drink. We were all so grateful to him. The little brown schoolmistress was there, too.

"Why," said the little widow, "I think I should have died of fright on that dreadful road if it hadn't been for Tennessee."

"Yes, indeed," cried number two. "The very thought of that brave man kept me calm, and I know if anyone else had been driving we would have been killed surely. What a splendid fellow he is!"

"Just the kind of driver I have always heard about," cried number three.

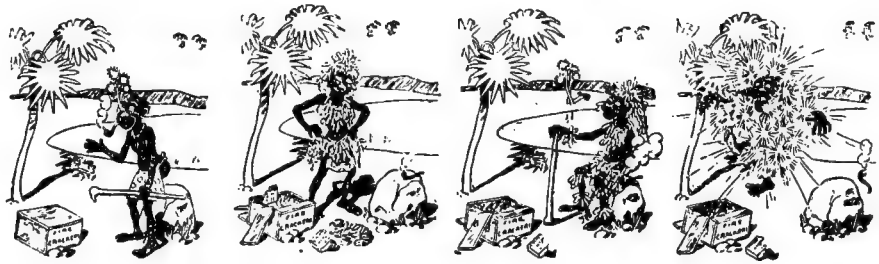
"You could pick him out from a thousand as a regular old stager," said number four.

"He's the bravest man I've ever seen," said number five.

"He's a great, big-hearted, fine fellow," said the timid man, "and a genuine hero, too. I'm thankful we had such a competent man over that fearful road. I don't know what would have happened to us with an incapable driver."

"Pardon me," said the little brown schoolmistress, who had been a silent listener, "but I think you are all mistaken. Tennessee isn't much of a hero. He's only been in the State two weeks, and to judge by his driving he never saw a stage before, and—well—the postmistress is married to the shot-gun messenger, and all those tall stories he told you happened to Fred Green, who drove you down to Murphy's this morning. Evidently Tennessee knew what was expected of him, and proved himself equal to the occasion."

S. W. Belcher.



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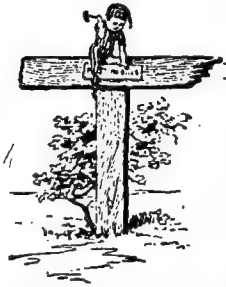
A Trial of Quicksilver



THE first two races of the day had been run, and now was to come the event of the year in the sporting neighbourhood of a certain county town in Loamshire: "The Top Boots Hunters' Steeplechase Plate," for horses regularly hunted during the past season with the Loamshire Hounds; prize, a valuable Cup; conditions, three miles over a fair hunting country, gentleman riders up.

The number of entries was just a dozen, amongst them being Mr. Spriggs' Shuffler (owner up), and Mr. Fred. Bolton's Carmen, to be ridden by the owner's particular friend, Will Walker, one of the most popular men in the neighbourhood. The interest of the forthcoming race had centred itself between these two, partly because it was known that they were immeasurably superior to any other horses in the race, that they were considered to be about as equally matched as any two horses could be, and the same weight having been allotted to each—eleven stone—it was thought by those best qualified to form an accurate opinion, that—bar accidents—one or other was almost sure to win.

There was also a spice of romance about the event, it being an open secret that one of the prettiest girls in the county, Miss Marriott, known to her intimate friends as Marie, was a special object of attraction to both Spriggs and Walker, and although the young lady had hitherto, to all outward appearances, shown equal preference to both, it was hinted that possibly the winner of the Cup might succeed in winning another prize of a very different description.

"If I could only be sure of her, my dear fellow, I wouldn't mind a bit," was Will Walker's remark to his chum Bolton, as they strolled up and down in the roped-off space designated by courtesy the saddling inclosure, the black mare Carmen, with her bridle loosely hanging on his arm, walking by his side as sedately as if equine vice was a thing that had never so much as entered her shapely little head.

"Well, old man, if you can't win on her, nobody can; she goes kinder with you than anybody else."

"It is very good of you to say so, but"—with a sigh—"I wish I could be sure of her—more depends on my winning this race than I dare to think of; and whereas one day she is as easy to ride as sitting in an armchair, all at once some little trifle upsets her, and it is all I can do to hold her. I hope she will be on her good behaviour to-day, and then — "

"Poor Mr. Walker," mocked a girl's fresh voice, "he would like Carmen to have no will of her own at all. That is a man's view of the whole duty of our sex nowadays, it appears," and she shook her head as implying the unjustness of the imputation.

A pained flush was the young man's silent rejoinder, and Marie, like the good-hearted girl she was, repented instantly of her thoughtless remark. Patting the mare's silken coat, she addressed her in a coaxing tone: "Now we are going to be on our best behaviour to-day, are we not?"

The expression on Walker's face changed instantaneously, and, raising his hat with a smile, he said: "It is very good of you to try and imbue Carmen with a sense of her duty, and I hope we may be lucky enough to win the Cup."

"That's better, Walker; I have been telling him, Miss Marriott, that our friend Spriggs' Shuffler is beyond doubt an excellent horse, and he won't miss winning for want of skill on his jockey's part, for although Spriggs is no favourite of mine, he is admittedly a first-class horseman; but then, as I was saying to Will, the mare has a wonderful turn of speed, and she always seems to do her best when he is on her. Hallo! here comes the man himself. How d'ye do, Spriggs? We were just calculating what chance my mare has of beating your horse."

"I suppose you have quite made up your mind to win, Mr. Spriggs?"

"Far from it, Miss Marriott. It is, I think, likely to be a close thing between us, and I think we both mean to do our best—don't we, Walker? Nothing venture nothing have." This with a certain emphasis that did not escape the notice of at least one of the assembled trio.

"An excellent motto, Mr. Spriggs, but for the honour of my sex I mean to pin my faith to the mare; but don't you think it is unfair for her; she is such a little thing compared to your big horse, to have to carry exactly the same weight. I see"—looking at her card—"each has eleven stone."

"If Spriggs would only concede me, say, seven pounds, or even five, I should feel much easier in my mind, that's all I can say."

"I dare say you would, my dear fellow; but all's fair in love and war, and you knew the conditions as soon as the weights were published."

"Well, it's no use talking now, I suppose, Jack," said Marie, turning to her brother. "I am going to bet you a dozen pairs of gloves that Carmen wins. Not that I anticipate that you will buy them for me if she does; that's the worst of betting with one's own brother."

"May I be allowed to accept the bet instead?" said Spriggs.

"No, thanks," with a slight flush. "Jack shall be my bookmaker, and, I hope, glove-provider for this occasion, at all events."

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"Now Jack, come along, mamma will be wondering where I have got to, and Mr. Walker and Mr. Spriggs will soon be making their way to the starting post; there goes the saddling bell. You can't both win, gentlemen"—making a demure courtesy—"but I hope one or other of you may; we don't want the Cup to go out of our own neighbourhood."

"Was it my fancy, I wonder?" mused Bolton to himself, as he and Walker moved away in one direction, whilst Spriggs went to where his horse was being led up and down by a groom, "but she certainly put Walker's name first, and didn't she refuse Spriggs' offer to bet with her pretty quick? Let me give you a leg up."

"No thanks, Carmen always stands better if I mount her my own way. Now then, old girl, steady does it;" and with the easy spring of a practised horseman, Walker swung himself lightly into the saddle.

A few minutes later saw the twelve competitors cantering down to the starting post, and as Walker passed Bolton, the latter noted with satisfaction that the mare was going easily, and not fretting or pulling away at her bridle.

"I hope you will win, old chap."

"And so do I, Fred, more than I can tell you. Well, it will be soon over anyway; Carmen is going like an angel."

The crowd of onlookers—keen sportsmen everyone of them—were loud in their praises of the two favourites, Carmen and Shuffler, the other ten hardly coming in for any attention.

"The horse will beat the mare, I suppose," said a burly farmer to the man next to him—Teddy Geall—who was known to be part owner of Shuffler with Spriggs.

"He ought to; o' course, he ought to; but I wish to goodness I was riding instead of Spriggs, and I would have been but for this confounded knee of mine. I don't say Spriggs can't ride as well, or better, maybe, than I can, but then, you see, he has an old grudge against Walker, and now here's this girl come atween them, and all Spriggs cares about is to stop the mare from winning, and if he can do that he'd as lief as not throw the race away! fool that he is! and a nice thing that would be for me. I stand to win or lose a lot more than I can afford, bad luck to it, I do."

"Can you tell me what the weights are, sir?" queried a bystander.

"Weights? Who said anything about weights? I beg your pardon, you must be a stranger, sir. I thought everybody on the course knew they all carry the same in this race—eleven stone."

"Thanks. I heard you speaking of Shuffler a minute or two ago, and I wondered what he was carrying, that's all."

"Quite so, quite so; he ought to win, too; the weight won't stop him, anyway."

"A good many people seem to think that the little black mare will stand a good chance."

"And I dare say they're quite right, too; but my opinion is the horse will beat her. By Jove they're off! No, a false start! Shuffler's at his old trick again," as the big chestnut dashed past alone, his rider having apparently lost entire control of him; at all events he only succeeded in pulling up after going several hundred yards immediately in the direction of the line of carriages, on one of which was seated Miss Marriott.

"That's taken a lot out of your friend's horse, I'm thinking."

"Yes, worse luck; I wonder what on earth Spriggs could have been thinking about."

"A nice thing you've gone and done," he shouted, as Spriggs repassed him.

"I should liked to have seen you hold him," was the reply.

"They're off this time right enough," was the shout a minute or two after, and so it was.

Making a demure courtesy.

As the dozen horses, all well together thus early in the race, passed the spot where Teddy Geall and the others were standing, it was interesting to note the expression on the face of the two rivals. Walker looked anxious, but not despondent, whereas Spriggs wore a frown of grim determination in which envy, hatred, and malice all had a share.

On they went without mishap over the first two or three fences, and then came the water-jump, at which Shuffler, Carmen, and one of the outsiders, Merlin, raced at best speed, the mare being between the other two. Seeing what was in front of her, she mechanically pricked up her ears, and seemed gathering herself together for an effort which her rider well knew would land her well on the far side of the obstacle.

Just, however, as she was within a few yards of taking off, Shuffler swerved slightly—not sufficiently to substantiate a charge of foul-riding against her jockey, as it might, Walker realised, have been purely accidental; but it was, nevertheless, sufficient to cause her to refuse, and her rider felt that, in consequence, the odds were a good 100 to one against his winning the race. To his credit, be it said, he did not proceed to thrash her for what was obviously no fault of hers, but, quickly turning her round, set her going again, and in an instant was well over, with a yard or two to spare. But the ground lost took

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a lot of making up, and it was not until well into the straight run home that the mare could get on anything like terms with the horse who had effectually outdistanced all the others. Bit by bit the distance between the two became lessened, and the spectators were wellnigh frantic with excitement as they saw the finish would be a near thing after all.

"The mare wins! No she don't! By Jove, she does! Come on, Walker, you'll do it yet!" were some of the shouts that rent the air, and the bonny little mare struggled gamely on, but she could not *quite* manage it, and the judge's verdict was "won by a head."

A triumphant look overspread Spriggs' face as he turned round to look at his defeated rival, who had eased up his mare as soon as he possibly could, and was patting her neck, although he felt he had lost considerably more than the race itself.

Everybody was anxious to console him, and it was evidently a matter for general regret that he had lost; on the other hand, the congratulations bestowed upon the winner were by no means numerous, as he walked his horse back to the paddock to weigh in.

Just at the same moment, Marie was saying to her groom: "You are quite sure of what you say?"

"Saw it with my own eyes, miss."

"Then Mr. Walker must know it without a moment's delay."

The man sped away, and reached the weighing-room just as Spriggs was in the act of dismounting.

Having done so, he gave the poor brute a dig in the ribs. "If you hadn't bolted, you beast, it wouldn't have been such a near thing."

"Well, he won the race for us, anyway; so you needn't be hard on him now," was his partner's reply. "Here, you've dropped your handkerchief; shove it in your pocket," handing it to him as he spoke.

Walker, who had also dismounted, was standing by, disconsolately thinking of what might have been, when he heard a voice saying to one of the stewards: "An urgent message, sir, for Mr. Walker."

The steward beckoned to Will to come to him. "You had better hear what this man has to say, Walker."

"You want me? Nothing wrong, I hope? Your mistress?"

"No, sir, not the missus, but Miss Marie sent me, saying as you ought to know——"

"Ought to know what?"

"Why, that you've won the Cup, sir," said the groom.

"Won the Cup? How?"

"Why, Mr. Spriggs didn't carry right weight; you object, sir, when he weighs in."

"Object? What's the good? He has just scaled, and the weight is right to an ounce. I heard the clerk of the course say so not a minute ago."

"Very well, sir, ask to see the weight cloth."

Spriggs' face suddenly assumed a livid paleness.

Marie.

"As second in the race Mr. Walker has a right to see the weights," interposed one of the stewards; "just turn them out."

The groom, who was close by, lost no time in obeying the order; there were two missing.

"Now what do you know about this, my man? Don't be afraid to speak out."

"Just this, sir; when Mr. Spriggs' horse bolted, I see him throw something away just as he was a pulling up, and if one of you gentlemen will be so good as to come with me to the spot, I think I can find the two missing weights."

The stewards looked at one another in consternation.

"This is a grave charge, Walker; but you yourself saw Mr. Spriggs weigh in, and he drew the full eleven stone."

"Yes, in spite of two weights being missing."

The steward turned to Spriggs.

"Have you any explanation to offer, sir?"

"If a groom's word is to be taken before that of a member of this Hunt, all I can say is——"

"It is my turn to speak, gentlemen, I think," interposed Walker. "Just now I saw Mr. Spriggs receive from his partner a handkerchief, and put it in his pocket."

"Really, gentlemen, I protest——"

"I am afraid we must ask you to submit it to examination; a pocket-handkerchief up or down can't make much difference."

"Take it then," said the now discomforted winner, as he hastily strode away, after throwing the article on the ground.

"By Jove! the man's right," said the steward, as he picked it up, and a small tin phial fell to the ground with a heavy thud. "Why, it is weighted!"

"What on earth is it? Let's have a look! Here, pass it this way!"

"I think you will find that phial contains quicksilver, unless I am mistaken," said a bookmaker; "I have known this dodge worked before."

"Let's weigh it. By Jove! it's exactly 5 lbs. Well, Walker, you have my best congratulations," said the steward, who had taken a prominent part in the unexpected *dénouement*; "if ever a man deserved to win a race you did, after the way you were baulked at the water-jump."

"Yes, it was a bit of a squeeze, I thought; but all's well that ends well. What about Mr. Geall's share in the business?"

"Yes, we shall have something to say to him presently. Of course, he and Spriggs must resign.

* * * * * *

"And so, Miss Marriott, thanks to your good efforts, Carmen has won the Cup, and you your gloves; and I say, Marie—Miss Marriott I mean, may I hope——"

Miss Marie's reply may be safely left to the reader's imagination, I think.

S. J. F. N.

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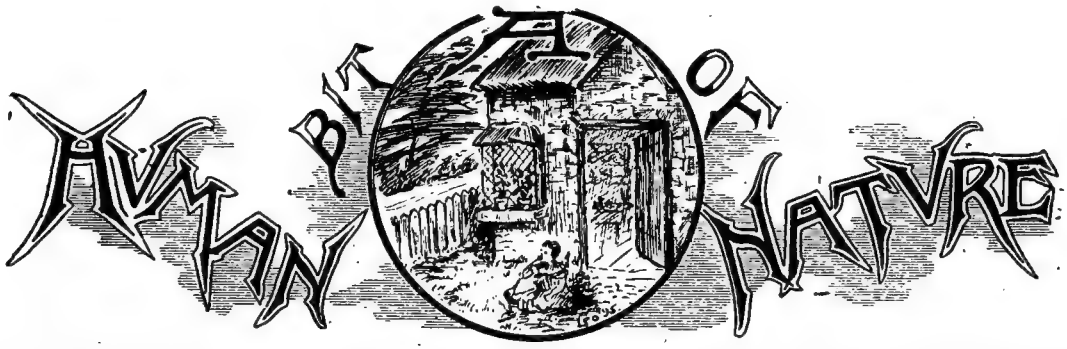

Only a little way from London, not half-a-dozen miles, in a country lane between Acton and Willesden, stands a little cottage. It looks very charming, this pleasant summer afternoon, and through the open window one can see a pleasantly furnished room and a young woman moving briskly to and fro as she makes preparations for the evening meal.

The little garden is gay with flowers, a blackbird in a wicker cage contributes his song of praise, and in the bright sunshine a little youngster, with chubby face and healthy brown legs and arms, sprawls upon the patch of grass in front of the cottage.

An old woman squats upon the roadside, and takes in the whole scene with a hungry glance.

Not a pleasant looking woman, with her dirty white hair, unkempt and dishevelled, and her red and blotchy face. She seems strangely out of the picture, this living bundle of rags, as she sits there munching a crust of bread, and indulging in idle speculation as to the occupants of the cottage.

"Yes, they're all right," she mutters, "plenty to eat and drink. I suppose it's a young couple not been married long, and that's their first little 'un. She's layin' the tea for 'im against 'im coming 'ome from work. I dare say they are 'appy. I wonder what it's like to be 'appy. You can't be 'appy, the chaplin used to say, unless you love someone. It's years since I did, and then it wasn't for long, not for long."

The girl inside the cottage opens the door and steps out into the sunshine. Catching her baby in her arms, she tosses him in the air, and then draws his laughing face close to her and kisses him.

With the child in her arms, she leans against the little gate waiting. "Waiting for 'er 'usband," sagely speculates the old woman; then suddenly: "Why, it's Emily, my daughter. Emily as I 'aven't seen for years. Yes, that's 'er, that's 'er. Why I'd know 'er among a million by the way she 'olds 'er 'ead. What a bit of luck. Why I 'aven't seen 'er not since they sent me to prison and 'er to a 'ome. 'Ow different she looks now. I wonder what she'll say when she sees me, 'er Ma," chuckles the woman. "It couldn't 'ave 'appened better. She'll 'ave to do something for me; so she ought. I brought 'er up, she's my daughter. I wonder if she told 'er 'usband who 'er mother was; p'raps I'd do better if I see 'er furst; she might come down 'ansome not to let 'er 'usband know. 'Ullo!"

The girl and the baby are waving their hands to someone coming along the road. The young wife's face brightens with happiness and love as her husband approaches—a fine sturdy young fellow, with broad shoulders and honest frank face.

"Jack, make haste," calls the girl; "baby and I are waiting; make haste, we've got such a lovely tea for you, haven't we baby?"

He reaches the gate, kisses them both, and then all three disappear into the cottage.

"Tea!" echoes the old woman, as she stands up. "Tea! I think, my dears, I'll join you. You've got a mother to provide for now, and it will cost you and your 'usband something before I'm satisfied," she chuckled again as she crossed the road.

The woman stopped when she reached the gate, and paused with her hand upon the latch.

A strange feeling which she had never experienced before took possession of her mind, a pure good feeling, an inspiration direct from God—"Be fair for once," it whispered. "You have never done anything for the girl except starve and beat her, don't spoil her life now."

"Leave 'er alone, why she's my daughter," and she half opened the gate. "Give up the chance of a 'ome and sovereigns and comfort, not me. Why should I?" As she stood at the gate wavering between good and evil, she could see her daughter through the open window—straight as an arrow, roses in her cheeks and happiness in her face.

How different when they were together last, both of them were standing in the charge room at Bishopsgate Police-station, and her daughter, a little thin-faced, hungry looking slip of a girl, hung on to her skirts, crying bitterly to her mother not to leave her.

But they were separated, the one to go to penal servitude, the other a Home.

"Do this one good deed," whispered the still small voice. "Be merciful. Her husband knows nothing, spare her and the child and him."

She turned quickly and walked from the place, pride in her eyes, and a new light in her heart, and yet withal a lurking fear; she knew herself too well. She had made this sacrifice. How long would it last? How long before hunger or drink or avarice tempted her back to the little cottage? She looked down upon the rags which covered her, the boots through which she could feel the sharp stones of the dusty road. She was old and disreputable; all she had in the world was a shilling and the memory of this one good action. With the money she determined to make her sacrifice complete.

* * * * *

Late that night there was almost a riot in a public house in Drury Lane, a white haired old woman, raving drunk, assaulted policemen, barmen, and bystanders indiscriminately. Shrieking defiance, she was taken to the station on a stretcher.

She smiled when she received her sentence, and still smiling left the dock. She was thinking, "My gal's safe now, safe from 'er mother."

E. C. Waggener.

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The Pope's Mule.

AMONG all the choice sayings with which Provence peasants embellish their discourse I do not know of a more graphic or curious one than the following: For fifteen leagues round my mill, when they speak of a spiteful, vindictive man, they say: "He is like the Pope's mule, that kept her kick for seven years."

I have long sought the origin of this proverb, and have at last found what I wanted—the history of the mule, and of that famous kick. It is a pretty story, and I will try to tell it to you just as I read it yesterday morning in a manuscript coloured by time and well perfumed with dried lavender.

He who did not see Avignon in the days of the Popes has seen nothing. Never was there such a city for gaiety, animation, and *fêtes*. From morning till night there were processions and pilgrimages; streets strewn with flowers and hung with tapestry; soldiers singing Latin in the squares; cardinals arriving on the Rhone with galleys decked with flags and banners floating in the wind.

The houses which crowded about the grand papal palace hummed like bees round their hive with the tic-tac of the lace-looms, the flying of the shuttles, weaving the gold of the chasubles, the little hammers of the sculptors, the music of the lute-makers, and the songs of the weavers. Above was the constant ringing of the chimes, and below the constant drumming of the tambourines upon the bridge.

There was one Pope in particular—a good old man, called Boniface—and, oh, how many tears were shed at Avignon when he died! He was such an amiable and engaging prince; he smiled at you so sweetly from the back of his mule; and he gave you his benediction so politely, no matter whether you were a poor little madder-picker or a grand city magistrate. He was a true Pope of Yvetot—but of an Yvetot in Provence—with something subtle in his smile, a sprig of sweet marjoram in his hat, and not a sign of a sweetheart. The only sweetheart which this good father had ever known was his vineyard—a little vineyard which he himself had planted among the myrtles at Châteauneuf, three leagues from Avignon.

Next to his vineyard, the dearest thing in the world to the Pope was his mule. The good man was passionately fond of this beast. Every night before retiring he went to see that the stable door was closed, and that there was nothing lacking about the manger; and he never left the table without having prepared a great basin of French wine, with plenty of sugar and spices, which he took to her himself, despite the observations of his cardinals. But it must be admitted that the brute was worth the trouble. She was a beautiful black mule, with red spots, a glossy coat, large and full hindquarters, and sure of foot.

She had a haughty carriage of her little lean head, all harnessed with pompons, bows, silver bells, and ribbons. She was gentler than an angel, and had a naïve eye, and two long ears which were always jogging, and which gave her the appearance of a good girl. All Avignon respected her, and when she passed along the streets there was nothing in the way of politeness that was not shown to her, for everybody knew that this was the surest way of standing well at court, and that she, with her innocent air, had led more than one person to fortune. In proof of this latter, witness the remarkable adventures of Tistet Vedene.

Tistet Vedene was an impudent rascal whom his father, a gold engraver, had been obliged to drive from his house because he refused to work. For six months he was seen dragging his jacket through all the gutters of Avignon, but chiefly alongside of the papal palace, for the rogue had for some time been directing his mind towards the Pope's mule, and there was mischief in it, as you shall see.

One day when his holiness was walking with his beast under the ramparts, behold Tistet thus accosting him, with hands clasped in an attitude of admiration: "Ah! what a noble mule you have there, holy father. Stop a moment while I look at her. Ah, what a beautiful mule! The Emperor of Germany has not one equal to her!"

And he caressed her, and said to her, as sweetly as if she were a young lady: "Come here, my jewel, my treasure, my cunning pearl." The good Pope, greatly moved, said to himself: "What a nice little boy; how polite he is to my mule." And do you know what happened the next day? Tistet Vedene changed his old yellow jacket for a beautiful lace alb, a camail of violet silk, and buckled shoes; and he entered into the service of the Pope where hitherto nobody had ever been received except the sons of noblemen and the nephews of cardinals.

Nor did he stop there. Once in the palace, the rogue continued the game which had proved so profitable to him. He was insolent to everybody except the mule, upon whom he bestowed all his attentions. He was always to be seen about the courts of the palace with a handful of oats or a bunch of French grass, which he would shake gracefully, looking all the while at the holy father's balcony, as if to say: "Hey! Who is this for?" So well did this trick work, that the good Pope, who felt himself growing old, finally allowed him to watch over his stable, and to take the mule her basin of French wine—all of which did not please the cardinals very much, nor did the mule enjoy it.

At the time for serving the wine she now saw five or six little clerks, with their camails and their laces, thrusting themselves into her stable, and then, in a moment, there was a delicious odour of caramel and spices, and Tistet Vedene appeared bearing the basin of French wine.

From that instant the poor beast's martyrdom began. These cruel profligates brought the perfumed wine, which she loved so much, to her manger, and made her

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fill her nostrils with its odour, then snatched it away from her and poured it down their own gullets. Nor were they satisfied with stealing her wine, for all these little clerks became so many fiends after they had drunk it. One would pull her ears, another her tail. Quiquet would mount upon her back. Beluguet would try his cap upon her. And not one of the rogues imagined that with a single kick the poor beast could send them all into the polar star.

But no; one is not a Pope's mule, a mule of benedictions and indulgence for nothing. The boys had done their parts well, and she was not angry with them. It was only to Tistet Vedene that she wished any harm. When she felt him behind her, her foot itched for him; and naturally enough, such wicked tricks did he play upon her, and such cruelty did he concoct for her after his drinking. Did he not one day conceive the plan of making her ascend with him in the bell-tower to the very summit of the palace?

I am not telling an idle tale; two hundred thousand people of Provence saw the occurrence. You can imagine the terror of the unhappy mule, when, after having revolved for an hour in a spiral staircase, and climbed I know not how many steps, she suddenly found herself upon the platform, dazzled with light, and looking down one thousand feet, upon a fantastic Avignon, with its market sheds no bigger than hazel nuts, its papal soldiers like red ants, and, stretching across a thread of silver, a little microscopic bridge upon which the people danced!

The poor animal roved disconsolately about the platform, her mind full of Tistet Vedene. "Ah, you ruffian," she thought, "if I escape from here, what a kick you shall have to-morrow morning."

This thought of the kick put a little heart into her legs, and without it she would have dropped. At length the people arrived to bring her down, but it proved a serious affair. It was necessary to lower her with ropes, a jackscrew, and a handbarrow. And think what a humiliation it was for a Pope's mule to find herself dangling from such a height, and working her feet like a May bug on the end of a thread, and all Avignon looking at her!

The unhappy beast could not sleep that night on account of it. It seemed to her all the time as if she were still whirling round on that platform, with the city laughing at her from below. Then, too, she kept thinking of that infamous Tistet Vedene, and of the fine kick which she proposed to send after him the next morning. Ah, my friends, what a kick that was to be! The smoke of it would be visible from Pampeluna.

But while this beautiful reception was being prepared for Tistet in the stable, do you know what he was doing? He was singing and sailing down the Rhone on a papal galley, on his way to the court of Naples with a troop of young nobles, whom the city sent every year to Queen Joan to perfect themselves in diplomacy and good manners. Tistet was not of noble birth, but the Pope wished to reward him for the care which he had given to his beast, and especially for the activity which he had displayed on the day of her rescue from the tower.

So the mule was disappointed the next morning. "Ah! the ruffian! he suspected something," she thought, as she shook her bells with rage. "But no matter; go along, you wicked fellow; you will find your kick on your return. I will keep it for you." And she did keep it for him.

Seven years passed, and then Tistet Vedene returned from the court at Naples. He had not served his full time there, but he had heard that the first mustard-maker to the Pope had just died suddenly at Avignon, and, as the position seemed a good one to him, he had hurried back to apply for it. When this intriguer entered the hall of the palace the good father had trouble in recognising him, so large had he grown.

But, on the other hand, the good Pope had grown old, and could no longer see well without his glasses.

But Tistet, not at all intimidated, said:

"What, holy father, do you not know me? It is I—Tistet Vedene."

"Vedene?"

"Yes; you know me well—he who used to carry the French wine to your mule."

"Ah, yes, yes. I remember! A good little boy, that Tistet Vedene. And what is it that he now desires of us?"

"Oh, holy father, it is only a little thing that I have come to ask of you. By the way, have you your mule still? And is she well? Ah! so much the better. I came to ask you for the position of the first mustard-maker, who has just died."

"First mustard-maker! You! But you are too young. How old are you?"

"Twenty years and two months, illustrious pontiff; just five years older than your mule. Ah! the gallant beast. If you only knew how I loved that mule! How I languished for her in Italy! Would you not let me see her?"

"Yes, my child, you shall see her," said the Pope, greatly overcome; "and since you love her so much, I no longer wish you to live far away from her. From this day I make you my first mustard maker. My cardinals will cry out about it, but so much the worse for them. I am used to it. Come to us to-morrow at the close of vespers, and we will bestow upon you the insignia of your rank in the presence of our chapter, and then—I will take you to see the mule, and you shall go with us to visit the vineyard. Ha! ha!"

I need not tell you with what impatience Tistet awaited the morrow. And yet there was someone in the palace still happier and still more impatient than he, and this was the mule. From the moment of Vedene's return until vespers the next day, the terrible beast did not cease cramming herself with oats and shooting at the wall behind her with her hoofs. She was also preparing herself for the ceremony.

When vespers were over on the following day, Tistet made his *entrée* into the court of the palace.

He made a gallant salute, then started towards the high steps where the Pope was waiting to bestow on him the insignia of his rank—a spoon of yellow boxwood and a saffron coat. At the bottom of the staircase stood the mule, all harnessed and ready to set out for the vines. As he passed near her Tistet smiled, and stopped to give her two or three friendly pats on the back, looking all the while out of the corner of his eye to see whether the Pope was watching him. The position was auspicious. The mule gave a spring. "Take it! catch it! reprobate! Seven years have I kept it for you!" And she sent after him a kick so terrible that they saw the smoke of it from Pampeluna—a whirlwind of golden smoke in which fluttered a stork's feather—all that was left of the unlucky Tistet of Vedene!

The kicks of mules are not ordinarily so dreadful; but this was a papal mule, and only think how she had kept her kick for seven years! There is not on record a finer example of ecclesiastical spite. A. D.

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THE CAVE OF THE DEAD.

FAR up in a rocky defile in the Everlasting Sierras of the land of the Montezumas, and overlooking a valley—the Valley of the Angels—rests the dwelling house attached to the Mines of the Holy Children, so named by the Jesuits far back in the dead past. A row of low, straggling adobe buildings reach up the cañon from the mill to a tiny plaza—a plaza containing a few stunted orange trees, a stone bench or two, and a broken fountain that never flows. Near the plaza stands the rude little chapel, so dilapidated in appearance that only a wooden cross lashed with raw-hide and leaning from the roof, and a cracked and clapperless bell hanging by the door, distinguish it from its surroundings as a house of God.

There is a house roofed with rough, red tiles terraced up on the mountain-side, above the church, and out in its wide portico, one summer afternoon, a young man rested in a hammock, carelessly swaying himself to and fro as his thoughts drifted back into the past. Near by, a girl—one of those creatures of the South through whose veins courses that Latin-Indian blood that turns to flame at a glance—stood gently pouring water from an earthenware jug into a flower-pot that hung suspended from the roof. Her dress was simple—some loose, white garment, exposing her arms and shoulders, with a skirt of red material, that fell only to a little below her knees. Great waves of dark hair fell unconfined down over her shoulders, and her eyes, black and brilliant, rested on the man.

The girl had emptied her jug and had placed it on the floor. She stood leaning against the doorway, slowly braiding her hair, and the man, turning suddenly in his hammock, exclaimed: "Ah! little one—Carmelita *mia*——come here."

"*Si senor*," she answered as she moved towards him. "What is the señor's wish?"

As she reached his side, he threw his arms round her, and drawing her face down to his, pressed a kiss to her lips.

Like a flash she tore herself from him and stood trembling out of his reach, a flame of angry protest darting from the depths of her eyes as she cried: "*Caramba!* What would you!" Then she struck him with her clenched hand, and bursting into tears, passed into the house.

"The little vixen!" exclaimed the man. "Well, somehow, her lips seemed to say, 'drink me,' and I have kissed her, even if she is only my housekeeper's daughter." Then stretching back in his hammock, Maurice Stanton, superintendent of the Mines of the Holy Children, made himself comfortable for his midday *siesta*.

As the days sped by, he made his peace with Carmelita, and after a while they would sit out on the portico during the evening, talking, or would wander up the cañon to a shrine, where a rude figure of a Madonna, with the Blessed Babe in her arms, had been carved in the rock by hands crumbled to dust long years ago; there was a little spring there, too, and a stone seat beside it, and there, one evening, he passed his arm gently round her and drew her to him. She did not resist.

"Kiss me, Carmelita," he whispered; "kiss me," and as she complied he felt her tremble in his arms. He released her, and she dashed from him down the pathway, and—he knew that he had won her.

It was during the following month that Señor Don José Sandoval, owner of the Mines of the Holy Children, arrived from the City of Mexico on his semi-annual visit of inspection. Accompanying him were two ladies, his sister, the Señora Gonzales, and his foster-daughter, Señorita Guadalupe Calderon, the sole descendent of an old Castilian family.

It was late in the afternoon of the day of her arrival that Stanton met her. She was leaning against the balustrade of the portico, gazing out over the roofs of the low houses to where a flock of doves rose and fell like a soft, undulating cloud of grey, and long afterwards he remembered her as he saw her then, a tall girl, taller than most, with great brown eyes, and with a wealth of hair which turned almost auburn when touched by the rays of the sinking sun.

During that first evening she brought her guitar and sang for him—sang those soft, sweet songs of the South; and on the following night they had Carmelita come and play while they danced—waltzed—time and again in the portico, lighted only by the beams of the moon.

As the girl played, she watched them with eyes full of anger, and she suffered, suffered as keenly, as dumbly as any creature, wild or tame, to whom there is a soul. Suddenly she stopped, threw down the guitar, and, darting across the portico, left the house.

She hurried up the cañon until she came to the shrine, and then threw herself on the bench sobbing. "Oh, Blessed Mother," she moaned, "I love him so, I love him so! Why has she come! I hate her! Oh, how I hate her! She shall not take him from me, no! I'll kill her first!"

Her breath came short and fast as her bosom rose and fell irregularly. In her anger she sprang to her feet, and, as she paced up and down, the nails of her tightly clenched hands pressed into the flesh until they were damped by the blood that oozed out. But she felt no pain, not in her hands, but—her heart. "Mother of God," she moaned, "Blessed Mother, send him to me to-night, for I love him so. I waited last night so long, so long—and he was with her. Dear God, don't let me think of *her!* I'll pray—yes, I'll pray to the Virgin a hundred times, and she will hear and send him to me."

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And there, still praying, two hours later Stanton found her. She was all unconscious of his presence until he softly called, "Carmelita!"

With a glad cry she sprang to her feet.

"Oh, the Blessed Lady!" she exclaimed beneath her breath, "she has heard my prayers and sent him." And as she stood there, the moonlight fell on her face, and he noticed that her cheeks were stained with tears.

"Why, Carmelita," he said, "you have been crying."

"Yes, señor—a little," she replied.

"But why, dear? Not for me?"

She cast her eyes down, and with a sigh nodded her head, and then burst into tears.

Gently he drew her to a seat on the bench, and, pressing her trembling form close to him, kissed her. "Carmelita, darling," he murmured, "stop crying and tell me what it is."

After awhile she ceased, and, freeing herself from his arms, turned to him and caught his face firmly between her hands. Gazing into his eyes, her own sparkling through her tears, she panted: "You love *me*, no?—*me?—me?* Mother of God what am I saying! You love *me?*—not *her*. Is it not so? She is nothing to you, no? You danced with her to-night, one—two—*so* many times. She shall not have you! You are *mine, mine!* Do you hear?"

He heard, and with something akin to fear, as he realised the intensity of her passion; yet he drew her back to his arms, and there, with her head pillowed on his shoulder, he told her that old, old story, and she—believed.

Whither he himself was drifting he did not know, neither did he care. He liked the charm of that dreamy, languorous life of the South, and his little affair with Carmelita was surely interesting; but what would the end be?—for end it must, and he thought that perhaps afterwards it might prove a dangerous amusement.

At times, even while with her, a vision of a girl with masses of reddish brown hair would come to him, and after awhile he realised that he loved Guadalupe. As the days came and passed away, he knew it for the truth, and knowing, he went to Carmelita, intending to tell her that all between them must end. But at the moment, thinking of the scene that must ensue, his courage failed him.

One evening, as Stanton was coming up from the mill, where he had been detained until late, he met Guadalupe as she came from the little church, and together they ascended the trail to the house. Then, in the portico, he placed her in an easy chair. Standing at its back, he took her hand in his, and she did not withdraw it. Then he told her of his love, and she threw her head back, raising her face to his. He bent and kissed her—and she promised to be his wife.

A low moan came from the shadow of the building, and Carmelita, standing there in the darkness, gazed at them with all the hatred of her wild nature aroused.

How she passed that night, she never knew; but in the morning she wandered, not knowing whither, up the cañon, past the shrine, and on until she came to where a precipitous bluff of rock abutted out from the mountain above. Here she unconsciously left the trail and climbed to its foot, where, turning a projecting ledge, she paused, and a fear came to her, for she stood before the entrance to the Cave of the Dead, an ancient burial-place of the Indians.

She had never been there before, but she had heard strange tales told of that rude sepulchre, and she knew that behind the slab of rock—ingeniously arranged to open as a door, and fastened with a wooden bar that closed the entrance—was a natural vaulted chamber, and she shuddered as she thought of the mummified dead within. She had heard her father tell of how they were placed round the cave, kneeling and sitting as though in prayer, and of how hideous they appeared, with eyeless sockets and shrunken cheeks, their skin dark-brown and parchment-like, filled with wrinkles and drawn back from their glittering teeth, and with their long black hair falling over the rags, once blankets, that covered their forms, as they rested there in the awful stillness of the death that had claimed them for ages.

She descended to the trail again, and walked slowly back until she reached the shrine. There she paused, and gazing long at the Madonna and Babe, made the sign of the cross. Seating herself on the bench, she bowed her head on her hands.

As she sat there, Stanton came up the trail with some miners, and as he passed he requested her to tell them at the house that he would not return until late in the afternoon. She answered not, but her eyes filled with tears as she sat gazing off into space, while she suffered in silence.

An hour passed, and then she became conscious of someone approaching. Rising from her seat and peering down the trail, she saw Guadalupe coming slowly towards her, singing softly to herself. As she watched, she realised how beautiful the girl was, and the hatred in her heart broke into flame, and a thought flashed through her brain that caused her to tremble and grasp at the bench for support.

Then, acting on the spur of the moment, she rushed forward crying: "Señorita! Señorita Guadalupe! Oh, how can I tell you! Señor Stanton——"

The girl turned faint and gasped: "What!—what is it? Where is he?"

Reaching her side, Carmelita panted out: "In the cave up there. He fell and is hurt—he wants you. Come," and turning, she led the way at a rapid pace; and Guadalupe, doubting not, followed in an agony of fear.

Breathlessly the girls sped on. Nearing the cave, Carmelita darted ahead round the ledge that screened the entrance, and opening the door, passed in before Guadalupe came up. Then, reaching out her hands, she cried: "Here, quick! Take my hand and I will help you to enter," and the girl, complying, stood at her side.

Leading her through the gloom away from the door, Carmelita caught her by the shoulders.

"I hate you and your beauty," she cried. "You took him from me, and he was mine, all mine!"

"What mean you!" Guadalupe exclaimed, as she broke away from her in astonishment, and she called, "Maurice! Maurice!" but no answer came, save the echo of her voice.

As she called that name, Carmelita sprang upon her like a tigress, and bore her to the ground.

"Maurice!" she panted; "ah, you shall never see him again. *Diabla*, while you are buried here in your living grave, I will watch him—*suffer!*" In vain did Guadalupe struggle to escape from the now furious girl. "After you are dead," she continued, "*dead!*—do you hear?—dead like those forms round us, I will kill—*him!*" and she pressed her fingers into Guadalupe's throat until the girl gasped for breath.

Springing up at last, she rushed from the cave, securely fastened the door, and stood listening as the imprisoned girl dashed against it—too late! One scream and all was silent; for Guadalupe lay stretched in a merciful oblivion on the floor amid the dead.

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For days the mountains and surrounding country were filled with searchers for the missing girl; but in vain, for not a trace of her could be found.

It was late in the night of the fifth day after her disappearance that Stanton, tired out and weary, yet unable to sleep, entered the little plaza, and, throwing himself on one of the old stone benches, sobbed out in his grief. How long he had remained there in his solitude he did not know; when, instinctively feeling the presence of another, he raised his eyes, and there, with a look of unmistakable scorn covering her face as she gazed down on him, stood Carmelita.

"Carmelita!—you!" he exclaimed.

"*Si, Señor*, I. You did not expect to see me, and too——" She did not finish, for he had dropped his head with a moan on the back of the bench. Then, as she stood there watching him, the truth came to her, that, after all, the hate she had allowed herself to imagine she felt for him was only a phase of her great love, and she dropped on her knees at his side. Winding her soft arms round him, she tried to draw his face down to hers.

"Carmelita," he said, as he put her gently from him, "all between us must end. I have lied to you, deceived you. I do not love you. To-morrow I will arrange in a way that will always keep you from want. Now, leave me, for I wish to be alone."

While he was speaking she rose to her feet, and stood with rigid limbs and clenched teeth, and as he ceased, she broke forth with a cry of rage:

"It is Guadalupe you love!" she cried, in her anger. "I heard you ask her to be your wife, but—she never will. No! no!" and she broke into a wild laugh, "She is dead by now—dead with the dead in the cave!"

Stanton sprang to his feet. "What, you daughter of Jezebel!" he shouted, and seizing her in his arms he lifted her up and dashed her from him with all his strength.

Don José and Stanton reached the cave just as the sun was rising over the distant mountains across the valley. With trembling hands they threw open the door and entered. At first, in the darkness, they could distinguish nothing, and then, as their eyes grew accustomed to the wan light, they saw—yes, there was Guadalupe standing before them, her dress disordered and torn, and her hair falling in a tangled mass over her face and shoulders. The fingers of one hand were pressed to her lips, and the other extended towards the kneeling forms of the dead. "Hush!" she whispered, "hush, they are praying—the fathers—wait! I will tell them you have come. Maybe they will not mind—they have been praying for so long, *so* long," and turning and saying: "Father Antonio, some visitors have come," she placed her hand on the shoulder of one of the dead. At the touch it crumbled with a dull rattle into a heap of bones and rags, throwing out a little cloud of stifling dust.

"It is horrible," moaned Don José, "oh, it is horrible—she has lost her mind! Guadalupe," he cried, stepping towards her, "don't you know me?"

She gazed at him for a moment, then slowly pacing the cave and winding her hair about her face, she murmured: "Maurice, my Maurice, is going to take me away. Oh, if he would only come; Guadalupe is so tired of waiting."

"Guadalupe," Stanton sobbed out, "Guadalupe, darling, I am Maurice. Come to me, dear."

She walked towards him, and standing there with her hands clasped across her breast, looked up into his eyes, her face kindling into transcendent beauty as she faintly smiled and slowly shook her head. "No," she said, "you are not Maurice—not my Maurice. I am to be his wife, and he loves me. No!—he is dead, he is hurt—he is in here—oh! I don't know—I can't find him," and dropping her clasped hands and bowing her head, she whispered: "He loves me—he loves me." Then stepping suddenly back, she threw her hands to her head, and, gazing at him with her great tawny eyes, "Maurice!" she screamed; "Maurice! save me!" and, as she tottered forward in a faint, he caught her in his arms.

Tenderly they took her from that place of the dead, and carefully they nursed her; but the shock had been too severe, and as the days passed away she sank lower and lower, until at last the end came.

It was not until then that she became conscious. She knew that she was dying, and bade them all farewell; though she had no fear of death, she wept, for it was so hard to leave that newly-found happiness in which she had lived but a few hours.

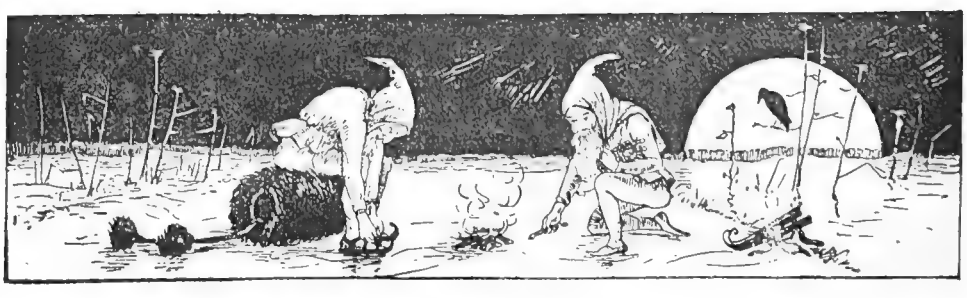
Late in the afternoon, as the last golden rays of the setting sun fell in through the open window and across her bed, she asked Stanton to take her in his arms. He gently raised her to his breast, where she rested quietly for a few minutes, and then whispered: "Maurice, darling, I am dying—kiss me, sweetheart."

He bent and pressed his lips to hers.

"Once again, Maurice, my darling," she said, "kiss me once again—the last—the very last time—for ever—Maurice—in heaven—my husband."

Her head fell back on his arm, and her sweet brown eyes, which never more would look on anything this side of heaven, rested on his face, as she passed to eternal peace down into the Valley of the Shadow.

G. W. Stealey.



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"VOX HUMANA."

He had just come off the pier, pausing to light a cigarette on the Metropole steps, where easy wicker chairs stood invitingly.

A woman seated with a book in one of them attracted his attention. She was deep in the hopeless love affair of a young and beautiful heroine.

"What are you looking at?" asked his friend the Doctor.

"That woman—that *ugly* woman," emphasising the words. "Why, when there is so much beauty in the world, are such people allowed to live?"

That afternoon he was sauntering past the hotel drawing-room, when the sound of a rich clear voice reached him. It stirred his pulses with strange delight, and he stopped, entranced by the wealth of feeling in the tones. The voice swelled out louder and louder, sinking to a breathless whisper as he listened. The singer's expression brought a gasp of wonder to his lips. He dared not enter for fear of disturbing her, forgetting everything but the soul-stirring voice within.

"Fortunate woman," he muttered, "to be blessed with all that is divine in life. A soul for melody, a voice with which to express it, and intelligence to render her songs perfectly."

He was passionately fond of music; his love for it governed his life. Melody was the most powerful agency to rouse his emotions.

The singing ceased. He pictured a girl with angel's eyes, and a halo of golden hair.

He entered. There at the piano sat "the ugly woman"—the same ugly woman of the morning's pity. She wore a brown cloth coat and skirt, over a colourless blouse which had once been heliotrope. A tie of black and yellow stripes, and a sailor hat with a blue veil turned up across her forehead. Her nose was long, her eyes small, her mouth wide, and her figure dumpy. But beneath it lay that great gift of sound, the human voice, which had thrilled her silent listener. He advanced.

"Thank you," he said, simply but heartily. She smiled.

"You overheard my song?"

"Yes. Would you sing again?"

Something in his tone prevented "the ugly woman" being offended.

"If you will sit behind me," she replied abruptly, pointing to a chair. Why that demand? Ah! he thought he guessed. She had fairly nice hair, and a good shaped head, which was rather pretty—when he sat behind her.

That night as he smoked with his friend the Doctor, he said quite seriously:

"If I stay here much longer I shall fall in love."

"In love! With whom?"

"The ugly woman we saw this morning."

Day by day he heard her sing, till the magnetism of the well-loved sound enthralled him, and became part of his life; yet he would never have thought twice of her but for that mysterious organ within. It was the voice alone attracted him, and she knew it. Ah! there was the sting—she knew it!

She accepted him, however, willingly enough when his love was offered. They had parted for a season till the wedding day. She was glad of his absence, since a chill had seized her and affected her throat.

She called on "his friend the Doctor."

"I have lost my voice," she said. "Shall I get it back? That is all I want to know."

"You have neglected your illness," he replied examining her throat, "and I think it is very doubtful if you will ever recover your voice. Even should you be so fortunate in years to come, it can never be quite the same again. You have consumption of the throat and——"

He broke off shortly, for "the ugly woman's" face was transformed, and in its conflicts with emotion became almost beautiful. The small dull eyes expanded, flashing fury, the limp lips set, while her figure towered suddenly to a stately height. She clasped her hands over her forehead, swaying backwards and forwards in a paroxysm of despair.

"You must not take it so to heart," said the Doctor. "The voice is not everything."

"Oh! no," she laughed—"not everything. It is so little to lose—only a voice!" She staggered to the door.

"And yet it is a cruel fate," she continued, still in the same excited manner—"a cruel fate for an ugly woman, who has only her voice to rely on."

She spent the following night in sleepless anxiety, with her lover's image ever before her, knowing in those silent hours that everything which made life worth living had been taken from her grasp.

"I say," he said, when next he met the Doctor, "I hope it is nothing serious about her voice. I hear she hasn't been able to sing for the last three weeks, and—and——"

"You would get rather sick of her companionship without it," his friend replied. "The fact is, you have engaged yourself to a woman years your senior, simply for the sake of a beautiful, soul-stirring voice. Well, that won't last, old man. It may be very well for the time, but it isn't the right thing, depend upon it!"

"I am sure I am not such a cad as to back out of our compact now," he retorted self-righteously, "only I hope she will soon get well. I don't want an invalid wife, you know."

"She won't soon get well. She has consumption of the throat, and——"

"Well——well——"

"You may never hear that voice again."

He started, his selfish nature rebelling against the suggestion.

"You mean it is done for already," he replied angrily,

"As far as I know—yes."

He did not speak for a moment, but seemed to be thinking deeply.

"It is very hard lines on me," he said, "her losing her one redeeming point! But I won't break the engagement, it wouldn't be honourable."

His friend smiled, half pityingly, half cynically.

"I shall just let events shape themselves," he continued. "I'll go abroad for a bit, and—and not write often, you know. Perhaps in time she may grow less fond of me. I should not be surprised if the marriage never takes place now, but *I* won't break it off—you understand."

"Of course," replied the Doctor, still with the same expression hovering round his lips. "*You* won't break it off—*you* are an *honourable* man!"

Winifred Graham.

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Almost a Tragedy.

I WAS spending the evening with my old chum, Harry Falkener, who was just then commencing to make himself known as a rising young barrister. We had dined in his rooms, and now were sitting, smoking comfortably, on the balcony of his house, indulging in a good talk. We had not met for some eighteen months, as I had been knocking about abroad a good bit, so we had plenty to do in exchanging confidences, and talking over our different experiences.

Suddenly he turned to me and said earnestly: "Do you believe in warnings or presentiments, old chap?"

"Certainly I do, to a certain extent," I answered; "but why?"

"Well, I will tell you. You know that I am not a bit nervous, or given to imagining things in the way of presentiments, dreams, second sight, and so on, so what happened to me a short time ago was something quite new.

"I went down to stay with the Burrells at their place in Norfolk for a few days this last June. I could not leave town till quite late in the afternoon, so what with long waits at country junctions, and then a drive of several miles from the station, it was past nine when I arrived at my destination. Dinner was over, so I had a quiet repast by myself, only seeing my host and hostess. The house seemed full of guests, Mrs. Burrell running through a long list of names for my benefit, but the people she mentioned were all strangers to me.

"I excused myself from appearing in the drawing-room that night, and, retiring to my room, commenced writing my diary. While I was thus occupied there came a tap at my door, and a man, quite a stranger to me, walked in. He was well dressed, in evening clothes, and was evidently a gentleman. I wondered what on earth he wanted, and my astonishment was greater still when he informed me that a lady wanted very much to speak to me for a minute, and asked me if I would go to her.

"I told him there must be some mistake, as I knew none of the guests in the house, and I had already seen my hostess. Despite repeated assurances on my part, he so insisted and begged me to come that my curiosity, being aroused, I at length complied with his request, and left my room with him. I followed him along the corridor, then through one or two turnings, till at length we came to a room, the door of which he opened and beckoned to me to come in.

"The room was prettily furnished as a boudoir, and rather dimly lighted, and at first I thought there was no one in it, but on glancing round I saw a girl, quite a stranger to me, lying on a sofa. She was so pretty that if I had ever met her before I should certainly not have forgotten her.

"We had hardly been in the room half a minute, and I was turning to my companion to ask him the meaning of this strange errand on which he had brought me, when to my horror I suddenly saw him spring at the girl, draw a dagger, and stab her. It all happened so quickly before I had time to do anything to avert the horrible deed, or even to realise the murderer's awful intention.

"Suddenly I found myself back in my own room, sitting at the writing-table as I had been when I was disturbed by my strange and unwelcome visitor. Glancing at my diary, which lay open as before on the table, to my astonishment I found the ink was still wet! I rubbed my eyes, and cudgelled my brains, wondering if I had been asleep and could possibly have dreamed such a horrible nightmare in so short a space of time.

"No other solution of the mystery could I find, think as I would. I had written my diary with an ordinary steel pen, which dries at the longest in three or four minutes. That I actually could have had any conversation with the stranger, and followed him to the scene of this horrible deed, seemed positively out of the question.

"I thought and pondered till I was tired, and at last got into bed, though my slumbers were anything but refreshing, and when I woke in the morning everything connected with this ghastly scene was as clear and as fresh in my memory as if I had only just witnessed it.

"I went down to breakfast, and, to my horror and astonishment, amongst the guests I recognised the very girl I had seen in my vision—or whatever it ought to be called—the night before.

"Her name, I found, was Maud Lefroy. She was an only child, and with her mother, who was a widow, was staying the week at the Burrells'.

"I naturally was very interested in them after my strange experience, and before the week was over I was on terms of good friendship with both mother and daughter, and they gave me their address, and pressed me warmly to come and see them in town.

"A day or two after my return to town I was walking along Piccadilly, when my attention became riveted on a man immediately in front of me. There was nothing remarkable in his appearance to justify my thus noticing him and singling him out amongst the crowd, but, despite myself, I kept on watching him, and a strange feeling of excitement came over me.

"At last I could stand it no longer, and was just going to overtake and pass him to see if it was anyone I knew, when he stopped suddenly to hail a hansom, and in doing so turned round, and I saw his face clearly. It was the face of the man in my dream, the man I had seen stab the girl on the sofa!

"For a moment I was almost paralysed; then, recovering myself, I jumped into the nearest hansom, and told the driver to follow carefully the one I had seen the stranger get into.

"This he did, and we found ourselves going down Piccadilly, past Hyde Park Corner, and presently got into Cadogan Square. My excitement increased, for No. 99, Cadogan Square was the address given to me by Mrs. Lefroy.

"The hansom drew up in front of the house, and on seeing the man standing on the door step ringing the bell, I got out and dismissed my cabman.

"By this time he had been admitted, and I walked

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on to make sure of the number. Yes, 99 was the number of the house he had entered, so I made up my mind at once to pay my long-promised visit to Mrs. Lefroy, and boldly rang the bell. I was admitted, and went upstairs wondering what was to be the upshot of this adventure. In the drawing-room I found both Mrs. Lefroy and her daughter talking to their visitor, who was introduced to me as Maud Lefroy's *fiancé*.

"Now, old chap, what do you think of my story? Unimaginative and unimpressionable as I am, I cannot forget my dream. It remains as fresh and clear in my memory as on the first day, and I feel certain I have not seen the end of all this. The wedding takes place next month, and I have made it my business to try and find out everything I can about Mr. Rivers, but have learned nothing except what everybody else knows about him—that he is a very good match, is an only son, and his parents are now dead.

"At first, in my horror and surprise on hearing of the engagement, I wondered if it was my duty to tell Mrs. Lefroy of my strange dream, but I could not quite convince myself I had any real right in mixing myself up and coming between two people who are devoted to each other. What do you think?"

"My opinion is that the dream, or vision, or whatever you like to call it, was simply the outcome of an overwrought mind. It is no uncommon thing for a man who exercises his brain to such an extent as you do to fall a victim to those occasional flights of fancy, and you have probably connected these two people with those who took part in this tragedy, because they more closely resemble the children of your imagination than anyone you happen to know."

And soon after that I said good-night and left, wondering if there was indeed anything in this strange story told me by my old friend, or whether overwork and mental excitement were alone responsible for a mere dream.

II.

Towards the end of September Harry Falkener and I found ourselves in the same house, staying with a mutual friend, who owned a moor in Aberdeenshire.

Rivers, whose marriage with Maud Lefroy was now ancient history, owned a moor a few miles away, and we had both promised to go on and spend a few days with them. I had not seen anything of them since the London season had ended, and Falkener informed me that he had not either. The friends we were now staying with only knew them slightly, and we heard very little about them, except that they had not been entertaining at all up in the North, which had been rather a matter of surprise, as Rivers' shooting was the best for miles round in that part of Aberdeenshire.

Somebody told us he had heard Rivers had not been well, and had been obliged to keep quiet.

On the morning of our departure for the Rivers' house, Falkener informed me that that very night he suffered that same experience which had so worried him at the Burrells', and he was sure it must mean that something was going to happen to the Rivers'.

We arrived at Glenaton only just in time to dress for dinner, and were warmly welcomed by Rivers and his wife. The latter, I thought, was looking older, and not as flourishing as when I had last seen her, but Rivers seemed to be perfectly well again, except for a slight irritability of temper, which showed itself now and then; and, indeed, I had never seen him in such good spirits. We found we were to be the only guests till the next day, when some more people were expected.

I went to bed pretty early, as we had had a hard day of it, and we had to be up in good time the next morning to make an early start, and within a minute or two of putting my head on the pillow I was sound asleep.

About midnight I was aroused by feeling myself vigorously shaken, and when I opened my eyes, I was startled by finding Falkener bending over me, his face white, and his eyes glistening.

"Wake up, Hugh," he exclaimed, still vigorously shaking me, and seeing that something really was the matter, I roused myself.

"I believe something is wrong with Rivers," he replied, "so I want you to hurry up and come with me."

While I quickly got into some clothes, he told me what had happened since I had retired. How Rivers had begun to get very excited, talking in the most extraordinary way, and had gone to Falkener's room after the latter had left him. "He wanted me," he continued, "to come with him to his wife's boudoir, saying she would like to see me, and we could all finish up our evening in there. I got rid of him at last, telling him I would follow him in a minute or two, as I determined to come and get hold of you. Coming along the corridor I heard his voice raised, shouting at someone, I expect his wife, so I think we—listen!" and he suddenly stopped. "What was that? Yes, good Heavens! it is. It is a woman's voice."

I listened for a second. Yes; there were sounds of loud voices, then half-stifled shrieks, and needing no further bidding, I dashed out of the room after Falkener, in the direction of the sounds, which seemed to come from a room at the end of the corridor.

A shriek greeted our ears as we rushed in, horrified and appalled at the sight which met our eyes.

On a sofa lay Mrs. Rivers, and bending over her was her husband, talking and gesticulating at her like a madman, while she lay cowering, unable to get away from him. He turned round at the noise of our entrance, and directly he became aware that they were no longer alone, quick as lightning he drew a dagger, and would have plunged it to his wife's heart had not Falkener and I, in the nick of time, seized him and wrested the weapon from him. Assistance was soon forthcoming, and the wretched man was quickly secured and put out of harm's way. Afterwards we learnt what had led to this dreadful scene.

It appeared, for the last two or three months, Rivers had been in a very unsettled state of health, both mentally and bodily. His illness took the form of violent fits of jealousy towards his unfortunate wife, who had never given him the slightest cause for his suspicions; and devoted as she was to him, her life the last few weeks had been a most miserable one.

Unfortunately, that very afternoon Mrs. Rivers had had a long visit from a cousin of hers, whom she had known from his boyhood. He happened to be staying in the neighbourhood, and had come over to see her.

Her husband had always been jealous of this cousin, as his affection for Maud Lefroy was an accepted fact, though on her side it had never been anything more than what she would naturally feel for anyone who had been like a brother to her in her childhood. This visit unluckily aroused all Rivers' sleeping jealousy afresh, and though he succeeded in controlling it before us, it smouldered all the evening, until it broke out in this appalling scene, which we luckily were in time to prevent becoming a tragedy.

W. H.

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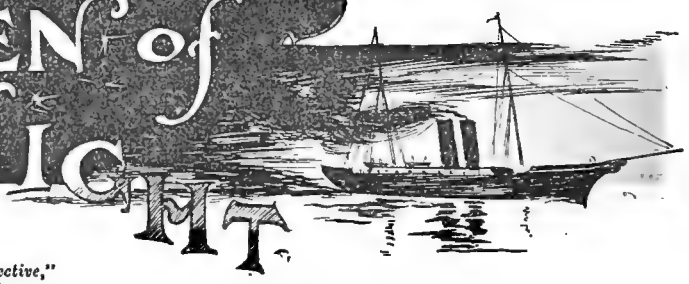
THE QUEEN of NIGHT



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By HEADON HILL,
(*Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.*)

PROLOGUE.

An octagon room, softly lighted by hanging silver lamps, and carpeted with Eastern pile of such generous woof that footsteps fell noiseless; the incense-like odour of fragrant woods burning in an antique grate; one priceless picture—no more—on each of the eight walls; and a white-draped dining-table bright with the glitter of cut crystal and the dull sparkle of ruby wine. At the table, facing each other, two men in evening dress are seated. Empty coffee cups and the curling wreaths of cigarette smoke mark the close of the repast, and even as we ring up the curtain on this eventful drama one of them—the guest—makes a move preparatory to departure. He is a slim, elderly man, with stooping shoulders and a faded face of the aquiline type usually called, in cant phrase, aristocratic.

He has already half risen from the table, when he appears to remember something, and drawing forth a pocket-book he reseats himself, and poising a pencil sends a curious furtive glance in the direction of his host.

"By the way, Vizard," he says nervously, "I was so interested in what you were saying that I neglected details. Would you give me that address before I go?"

As he waits for the answer his eyes wander to the pictures, to the flower-crowned epergne, to the dishes of hothouse fruit—anywhere but to meet the calm gaze that is watching him from across the table. The fingers that hold the pencil tremble like aspen leaves.

The voice that gives the information is clear-cut and musical. "My dear Sir Simon, of course I will," it says. "The name of the vessel is the *Queen of Night*, and the agents are Nathan and Co., 315, Harp Alley, Fenchurch Street. They have a West-End branch in Pall Mall, but if you require a *special* arrangement you would have to do business with Mr. Nathan himself—at the City address."

The host—he who answers the question—is by far the most striking personality in the room. Six feet high and splendidly proportioned, he attracts attention rather by the magnetic power of his well-chiselled face than by his inches and the muscular force revealed in the broad chest and massive shoulders. Clean-shaven, with square jowl and deep-set unfathomable eyes of steely grey, Gaston Vizard, the mystery of four London seasons, is known in the *beau monde* he frequents as the handsomest man about town.

Yet are there one or two keen observers—women mostly—who avow that they have surprised an expression on those readily-smiling lips that has turned them faint with fear. No one knows his origin, though that matters not nowadays when "dollars maketh man." He is immensely rich, and, in the jargon of society, is "received everywhere," justifying that reception, too, by the perfect breeding of his manners, and by the princely hospitality dispensed by him both here in his Park Lane mansion and at his country house in Hertfordshire. Even his nationality has never been rightly settled. Some say that he is of the old French *noblesse*, but born in America; others that he led a revolution in Chili and escaped, more fortunate than most of the kind, with his money and his life. For the rest, he might be any age from thirty to forty-five, and anyone meeting him in the street might take him for an officer of cavalry.

The guest writes down the address and again rises with the evident intention of taking his leave. Vizard comes round from his seat at table to accompany him to the hall, but once more he who has been called Sir Simon hesitates, and, with a quick nervous gesture, detains his host from leaving the room. The latter stops short with his hand on the door, and, towering over the shrinking figure, invites further questioning with a mere elevation of the eyebrows.

"It all seems so risky," falters the elder man. "How should I open up negotiations with Nathan—for what you

Poising a pencil, sends a curious furtive glance in the direction of his host.

call a special arrangement, I mean—without fear of compromise?"

Vizard takes from his vest pocket a little sheaf of cards, neatly banded together, and, selecting one, hands it to his guest. "Give him that," he says. "Nathan will under-

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stand that you mean business, and are properly introduced. You need *tell* him nothing beyond the name, and *do* nothing but pay what he asks. The terms are high, but may be regarded in the light of an investment. There will be absolutely nothing in writing. It is the essence of the system to take all risks without possible compromise to clients."

Sir Simon glances at the card. It is blank, save for a red heart pierced by a black arrow. "Good God! how horrible! —a sort of modern *lettre de cachet*," he says shuddering. "And you are sure, Vizard, that this will be effective—that there will be no hitch! It would be terrible to tempt Fortune in such a way and fail."

There is a touch of amused contempt in Vizard's tone as he replies:

"There are no failures. If Miss Challenor takes the trip under the special arrangement, her health will receive the attention you require for her."

With these words he opens the door as though there is nothing more to be said, and leads his guest downstairs to a splendid entrance hall, where two footmen spring quickly to attention. One comes forward with Sir Simon's hat and Inverness cape, and the other flings open the front door to summon the waiting brougham. A few words of commonplace farewell are exchanged, and the carriage rolls away, leaving Vizard gazing after it from the top step with an inscrutable smile. There is nothing to distinguish the neatly-appointed equipage from the hundreds of similar ones it meets as it turns into Piccadilly; yet it bears the beginning of a train as deadly as any ever laid to mine of gunpowder.

After a minute, Vizard goes slowly upstairs again to the octagon room where he has entertained his guest. Touching a hidden spring in the wall, he reveals a cunningly concealed iron safe, whence he takes a small morocco bound ledger, in which he makes a few rapid entries. What he writes is in cypher, and quite unintelligible to anyone not possessing the key. This done, he replaces the book, relocks it in the safe, adjusts the secret panel, and is glancing at the clock, when, after knocking, a manservant enters to announce:

"Dr. Zavertal."

The subject of the announcement follows quickly into the room, and Vizard advances to greet him with the effusive cordiality of one who is pleased to see a congenial acquaintance. This only lasts, however, till the servant has closed the door and retired. The moment they are alone the show of demonstrative friendship is dropped on both sides for something closer still—for a brevity betokening that their relations are confidential and intimate.

"Everything is in order?" inquires Vizard, not with any anxiety of manner, but as though some importance attached to the answer.

"A most satisfactory cruise," replies the Doctor, rubbing his hands softly together in true professional style, as he seats himself in an arm-chair with the air of being thoroughly at home. He is, in his way, almost as remarkable as his friend—this English-speaking medico with the curious foreign name. Short in stature, he is rotund and stout withal, and wears on his broad weather-browned face a cheerful expression of good fellowship that may well make him a favourite with his patients.

But looking closer, especially now that he has thrown restraint aside, one might see in his blue eyes, smiling though they are, the same steely coldness that has been noticed in Vizard's grey ones. Seen here for the first time in private, and narrowly studied, he would perhaps give the impression of a man who is always playing the part of "a genial soul"; and that the character, though not natural to him, has become so ingrained that he lays it aside with difficulty. Gradually, as he talks to his companion of strange doings on the sea, his face hardens, and the purring smoothness of his voice takes a more metallic ring.

Vizard, evidently knowing the Doctor's habits, mixes a glass of claret and water, and hands it to him without remark, as a matter of course. Then he leans his back against the mantelpiece and pursues his questioning:

"News of three of the 'specials' reached me in ordinary course of post. There was still one unaccounted for when you left Gibraltar?"

"That was Trefusis, the Tyneside coal-owning millionaire," says Zavertal, sipping his claret, "he died as we were crossing the Bay of Biscay. Hæmorrhage of the liver, with complications, I was able to certify."

"A sort of modern lettre de cachet."

The two men look at each other strangely. There is a dash of droll humour in the Doctor's eye, a cynical twist on Vizard's mouth. Then the latter says:

"That was rather leaving things to the last, was it not? The off-chance of having to bring him home for burial, I mean."

"There were circumstances to cause delay. Being in charge on the spot I have often to be guided by such. You can have no idea what trivial things occur to hamper me sometimes. I would rather bring a 'special' home again than take risks," replies the Doctor, with a tinge of remonstrance in his tone. "There was no difficulty whatever," he adds. "I was able to say that the nature of the case demanded immediate disposal of the remains. He was buried the same day at sea."

"Good," says Vizard. "The 'special' department is on a sound footing, then, and will show a handsome balance on the voyage. Is there anything fresh in ordinary administration?"

"Yes; we shall have to find a new skipper for next cruise," replies Zavertal, not, however, as though the information were of unusual importance. "Captain Luck expresses his intention of giving up the command, and I expect his resignation is on its way to Nathan by this time. On parting from me at the Docks this evening he said he had fully decided not to make another trip in the *Queen*."

"He does not suspect?" says Vizard impassively.

"Oh, dear, no—nothing of that kind," returns the Doctor. "I flatter myself he would never have left the ship carrying so much as the germ of suspicion with him. He has been promised the command of a steamer in the Australian trade—a regular liner—and he thinks the prospect more certain than on a pleasure cruiser only running part of the year. He has been talking of chucking the berth these several voyages past."

"H'm," reflected Vizard aloud. "Luck combined the three essentials of good seamanship, social charm, and crass stupidity. It will be difficult to find such another all in a hurry, but it must be done. My 'special' arrangements for next cruise are nearly completed, and in a day or two we shall be able to give Nathan the date of sailing."

"Excellent Gaston," says the Doctor approvingly. "And how many 'special' patients do you hand over to me this time?"

"Two are finally settled. The young Earl of Darranmore, a boy of fourteen, fresh from Eton: and Desmond Orlebar, a country gentleman of Hampshire," replies Vizard with the coolness of an auctioneer cataloguing his "lots." "The first goes at the instance of his uncle, Ralph Darran, who is next heir to the title: and the second under the auspices of his wife, who I suppose has some feminine

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reason for desiring a change. Then to-night I have had Sir Simon Crawshay here. I have been playing the half-hearted coward quite a long while for his ward, the

"Kennard is in Europe."

rich Miss Challenor, and he is as good as captured at last. He went away after dinner with the usual introduction to Nathan in his pocket, and you know how that pans out."

"Yes, they never draw back when they have confided in you so far as to extract that gentle missive," assents the Doctor. "We may count on three, then—all told—and quite as many as I care to have on one trip, now that the boat is so popular and crowded with ordinary pleasure seekers. By the way, that new rule, that 'specials' shall not be accompanied by the principals too, or by anyone cognisant of the private arrangement, is eminently satisfactory. When we first began we narrowly missed more than one miscarriage through clients, by being on board, having the chance to relent at the last moment."

"I thought that would strengthen the system and lighten the strain upon you," remarks Vizard with the lazy self-contentment of a man who has fathered a good idea. "And speaking of vigilance reminds me," he adds, stiffening up and taking a step forward to look down impressively into Zavertal's upturned eyes, "I had advices from Cincinnati a week ago that Kennard is in Europe."

The Doctor laughs, quite harshly for a man of such genial temperament, and for the space of two seconds the crowsfeet on his broad face deepen into visible channels. Then he says jauntily: "And what of that? I beat him before and could do it again. They make a little god of him in the States—as the greatest detective of the age—but he doesn't often meet *men*."

"Quite so," replied Vizard, "and his present journeyings can have no concern with us. But, as he alone knows your record, I thought you should be aware that he is on this side the Atlantic. Of myself he has no knowledge, for which, perhaps, he rather than I should be congratulated."

Doctor Zavertal's only answer is a smile of intense amusement. Then, after a pause, he rises, and, draining his glass, says with apparent irrelevance:

"The *Queen of Night* sinks all obstructions, eh, Gaston?"

CHAPTER I.

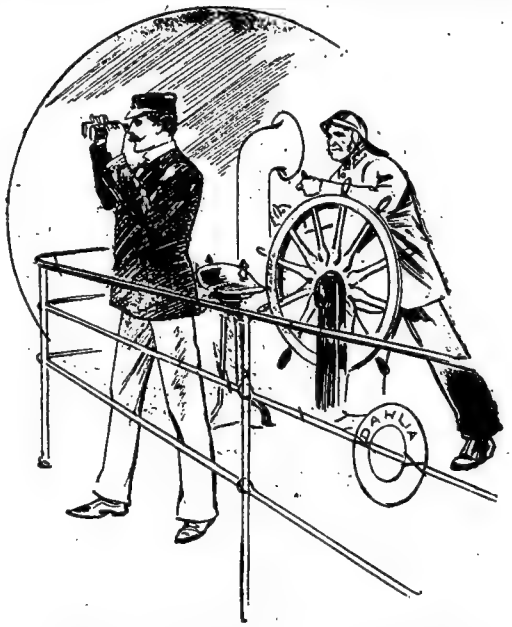
Hard Lines.

"Deuce take the luck!" That was the phrase which embodied my sentiments as I kicked heels in the outer office of the Flower Steamship Company, while the directors deliberated on my case in the seclusion of the board-room. I was as certain of "the sack" as man could be. I knew it from the proverbial devotion of our board to red-tape; I knew it from the sympathetic glances flung at me by the clerks from behind the great brass-rimmed counters; I knew it from what good old Beatson—kindliest of skippers—prophesied when he promised to "speak a word"; and, above all, I knew it because I am a sailor, and, believing in presentiments, believed in that which told me that my hours as first officer of the *Dahlia* were numbered.

Directors are fond of letting their jaw-tackle run, so as they are safe for another ten minutes before they have me in for sentence, I may as well spend the interval in overhauling my log of what has thrown me on my beam-ends. My name is Cyril Forrester, at that time thirty years old, five feet ten in my stockings, sound in wind and limb, and holding a master's certificate in the mercantile marine, though never yet in command of a vessel, and under present circumstances, never likely to be. The Flower Line of steamships, as every one knows, plies between London and Calcutta, touching at the chief Mediterranean ports; and the little incident that gave those grim old hunkses in the board-room the chance to get their knives into me occurred on the last voyage out.

We had left London on a Tuesday afternoon, and all went well till the following Thursday morning, when we were steaming a steady fifteen knots across the mouth of the Channel. It was my watch, and except for the quarter-master, who was steering, I was alone upon the bridge, the Captain being at breakfast in the saloon. The weather was thick, with a nasty, choppy sea, and the third officer, who shared my charge of the deck, was forward on the fo'castle seeing that the look-out man didn't go to sleep.

Suddenly, my ears were startled by a scrunching crash from, as far as I could judge, about two hundred yards off



Except for the quarter-master, who was steering, I was alone upon the bridge.

on the port beam, followed by screams and shouts, which told me as plain as words could speak that two vessels were in collision close at hand. Almost at the same moment the haze broke a little, and showed me the black hull of a steam-collier slinking away to the westward, and a smart, yawl-

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rigged yacht cut down to the water's edge, and with scarcely a minute to float.

I altered the *Dahlia's* course so as to bring her round to the sinking craft, singing out at the same time to the third officer to clear away a boat. As we neared the yacht, I could see that all was confusion on her, and no wonder, her one boat was stove in, and the rascally collier, instead of standing by to help, was already out of sight in the mist. To make matters worse, I caught sight of ladies on the sloping deck, and I knew that unless the yawl floated a few minutes longer they would be in danger, since our ship came round slowly on a jammed helm.

I was keeping one eye on the men engaged in lowering the boat, and the other on the yacht, when she plunged forward, then staggered back and went down stern foremost, leaving her people struggling in the sea. Our boat was still at the davit, the freshly-painted gear working stiffly, and I could see that anyone who was not a strong swimmer might be swept away and drowned before they could be picked up. It was no time to reckon rules and consequences, and almost before I knew what I was going to do my shoes were kicked off, and I had taken a header from the bridge.

Our ship had greatly reduced the distance, and a few strokes brought me to the scene of the disaster, where about half a score of people were keeping themselves afloat in the best way known to them. Luckily the yacht was too small to have sucked them down. An elderly gentleman in flannels, with a life-belt on, was hanging on to a spar, and a man who looked like the sailing-master was supporting a lady who was screaming at the top of her voice some word which I could not make out. The rest, all men, and evidently the crew, were swimming strongly towards the *Dahlia*.

I was beginning to think that I had been rather too officious, when a draggled wisp of blue serge, rising in the water between me and the gentleman on the spar, caused me to change my mind and feel glad that I had come. It was the insensible form of a woman, floating limply to the surface for the first time after immersion, and on the point of sinking again when I managed to grab her by the arm. I noticed no more than that she was young and lay quite a featherweight in my embrace, for my chief concern was now with the arrival of the boat. Looking round I was glad to see it coming towards us fast, while the *Dahlia* herself was standing on at quarter speed lest she should run down the yacht's crew who were already reaching her side. Seeing how I was hampered, the third officer steered his boat straight for us, and, after picking us up, went on for the sailing-master and his burden, last of all taking in the man on the spar.

Five minutes later we were all safe on board the *Dahlia*, and the two ladies, who were alone the worse for the accident, were handed over to our surgeon and stewardess. The passengers, who had come up from the saloon to witness the rescue, crowded round me with the usual fuss of congratulation and curiosity, so that another ten minutes passed before I could slip into dry clothes and join the Captain on the bridge. He shook hands with me warmly, but he was looking as solemn as a church.

"This is going to end badly, Forrester, I am afraid," he said. "You only did what any decent chap would have done, but you know as well as I do that it was dead against the rules. To leave the bridge with no one in charge is a heinous crime with the wiseacres of Leadenhall Street, and I am bound to log the incident."

"I never gave the rule a thought," I said, "and I don't believe it would have made any difference if I had."

There having been no loss of life the excitement soon calmed down, and we stood on our course southward. It was ascertained that the sunken yacht *Norah* had been chartered for a channel cruise by Sir Simon Crawshay, the elderly man who had saved himself by clinging to a spar, and that the ladies were respectively his sister, Mrs. Beauchamp, and his ward, Miss Aline Challenor, the latter being the girl whom I had managed to pick up. In the course of the morning I heard that Miss Challenor had revived quickly under the surgeon's treatment, and that Sir Simon had decided to go on in the *Dahlia* to Naples, whence he would be able to take his party home overland more expeditiously than from Gibraltar.

I saw no more of the ladies that day, but during the afternoon, being off duty, I was talking to some of our own

It was the insensible form of a woman.

passengers on deck when Captain Beatson passed in conversation with Sir Simon. The latter had been fitted with dry clothes by some passenger, and he appeared to be none the worse for his dip. I cannot say that I took much of a liking for the man. I saw by the furtive way he kept his eyes askance that he had recognised me, and one would have thought that under the circumstances he would have wished to say something civil. But they passed and repassed several times on their promenade, Sir Simon always at that moment finding an object of interest at the other side of the deck, and Captain Beatson too busy with his discussion to notice surroundings. At about the fifth turn, however, the skipper's eyes chanced my way, and he at once brought his companion to a halt, introducing me as the officer who had got Miss Challenor into the boat.

* * * * * *

It was not till the next morning that Aline Challenor appeared on deck, and I formed the acquaintance that was destined to lead to such wonderful things. I can see her now, as she came forward with both hands outstretched—a dainty fairy of a girl, with a clear fresh complexion and real violet eyes that could be frank without being forward. Her own simple blue serge yachting dress had been dried and put to rights for her, and I should never have recognised in the smart little figure the poor, pale, half-drowned creature whom I had held in my arms the day before. As she thanked me in a few frank words for my help I thought I had never seen such a pretty girl before, and—there! as the whole of the story hinges on it there is no need for secrecy—I fell over heels in love with her there and then.

"I am very glad to have been of use," I said, trying not to show my admiration in my face. "But there is really no reason why you especially should thank me. You see I just 'went it blind,' and it was as likely to have been one of the others I chanced upon as you. I am glad it wasn't, though."

"You shall not rob me of my gratitude," she replied. "At any rate it *didn't* happen to be one of the others, and it *did* happen to be me, and—and I shall never forget it."

From that beginning our friendship grew rapidly, as it

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only can on shipboard, and by the time the *Dahlia's* bows were turned eastward through the Straits, it had brightened into that later phase of friendship, in which, without awkwardness, there can be long silences. Sir Simon's demeanour towards me continued curt and distant—that of his sister, Mrs. Beauchamp, equally so—but he could not very well forbid his ward to speak to the man who had saved her life; and though it was plain that he viewed our increasing intimacy with dislike, he probably counted on the coming separation at Naples to put an end to it.

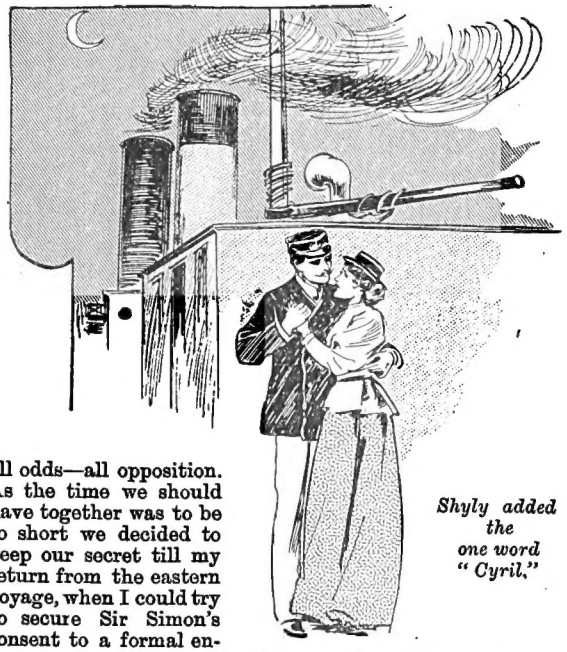
If so, he was out of his reckoning by about thirty hours. We were that time distant from our port of call, and I remember, as if it were yesterday, what a beautiful Mediterranean evening it was, when Aline and I shook off the chrysalis shell of friendship for the golden butterfly of love. I found her behind the aft wheelhouse—that time-honoured tryst of sea-going lovers—and for several minutes we watched the white streak eddying from the screw. Then I said:

"Aline, are you sorry that your voyage on the *Dahlia* is so nearly at an end?"

It was the first time I had called her by her Christian name, a fact of which the significance will be appreciated by those who have "been there" themselves. Her answer came, faltering a little, but prompt enough for me:

"You know I shall," and then after a pause was shyly added the one word—"Cyril."

This is no love story—there is sterner work ahead—and I have not space, even if I had the will, to write down here the words in which my sweet girl and I plighted our troth. All I can say is, that though I had seen thirty years without any sweethearting, it came natural enough at last, and that when we left the shelter of the wheelhouse we were bound by every promise to be faithful to each other against



Shyly added the one word "Cyril."

all odds—all opposition. As the time we should have together was to be so short we decided to keep our secret till my return from the eastern voyage, when I could try to secure Sir Simon's consent to a formal engagement. Aline would not come of age for a year, and in the meanwhile, under her father's will, she was not permitted to take any step without her guardian's sanction, though in our new-found happiness we paid but little heed to possible opposition from that quarter. At the worst there would be but nine months from the date of my return to wait before she would be her own mistress.

So we parted, full of hope and mutual trust, in the bright sunshine of Naples Bay, and here I was on the day after the *Dahlia's* return waiting to be carpeted for the "grave dereliction of duty" which had given Aline back her life. Even as I came to the end of my reverie a bell rang, and a clerk invited me to step into the board-room, where one glance at the faces of my censors told me my fate at once. The chairman, an old fellow whiskered all round his face like a cat, and having a fierce eye, rose at once—rose, too, as if he liked the job.

A little shrivelled old Jew.

"We have fully considered your case, Mr. Forrester," he said. "While quite recognising the gallantry of your act, we cannot pass over the breach of the company's rule which forbids an officer to leave the bridge till another officer has come up to take his place. As a practical sailor you must see that the ship, and—ahem—the lives of the passengers, might be endangered by such an irregularity. We regret it exceedingly on many grounds, but your employment by the company must terminate with the voyage just concluded."

On the whole I managed to keep my temper, but I said a few polite things about their rules which made the old gentlemen look very thoughtful before I bowed myself out and stepped down into the street, a cast-off servant. My first impulse was to charter a hansom and drive to the address in Grosvenor Square, at which Aline had said I should find her, but then there rushed over me the sudden remembrance that the situation had altered. For the present I was a broken man, and though I did not despair of getting another berth, a feeling of pride urged me to take some steps to that end before presenting myself to Sir Simon. I knew not then that my girl was a great heiress, and that a first mate's proposal for her hand would be nearly as presumptuous as that of a penniless pavement-trotter.

I knew a restaurant near Fenchurch Street Station, where the shipping newspapers were taken, and thither I made my way to see if the advertisement columns had anything in store for me. As I entered my eye was caught by a written notice stuck on the wall. It ran as follows:—

"The owners of the screw steamship the *Queen of Night*, 7,000 tons, used as a pleasure cruiser or ocean yacht, require a commander having the necessary certificates. In addition to the usual qualifications as to seamanship, etc., he must be of good social address and able to act as host to the passengers on terms of equality. Apply to Nathan and Co., 315, Harp Alley, Fenchurch Street."

As I finished reading, and before I had digested the words, a lean hand was laid upon my shoulder, while a garlic-flavoured voice croaked in my ear:

"The notish is to your liking, my young captain, I hope?"

Turning quickly on my heel I saw that he who had accosted me was a little shrivelled old Jew, or, rather, the quintessence of about fifty Jews boiled into one, so pronounced were the national characteristics of fleshy lip, hooked nose, and shining protuberant eyes that looked up at me with a cunning leer.

(To be continued.)

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THE MISERY OF CORPULENCY.

A copy has come to hand of the just issued 18th edition of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure" (246 pages), the clever little volume which, more than anything else, has brought a revolution in the treatment of obesity. That the still larger circulation implied by the issue of the new edition of this popular work is necessary is proved by such a paragraph as the following. It appears among the answers to correspondents in the "Dress and Fashion" column of a Sunday newspaper with a large circulation: "MISERABLE.—A young girl of 18 ought not to have such a large stomach that no dress looks well. Perhaps you require exercise and dieting." The helpless vagueness of this reply to a young girl who is naturally "miserable" on account of her unseemly obesity is a sufficient evidence that Mr. Russell does well in seeking to make known, even more widely than they are at present, the simplicity, the efficiency, the rapidity, and the delightful surroundings of his treatment for the reduction of superabundant fat. The young girl in question, who might exercise and diet herself for months without any appreciable improvement, may easily learn to imitate the example of thousands of ladies of all ages, who, by the use of Mr. Russell's pure vegetable preparation, have reduced their weight at the rate of pounds per week, and sometimes (but only when necessary, for the working of the cure is virtually automatic, stopping its effects when the normal limit is reached) stones per month. She may acquire this open secret—for the author makes no mystery about the ingredients of his recipe, by sending six penny stamps to Mr. Russell's offices, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., when a copy of the book will be sent post free. If she follows his instructions, "Miserable," without any fasting regimen, and without excessive exercise, will find herself being quickly reduced to shapely proportions, with an improved appetite, and full liberty to gratify it.

LONGEVITY AND CORPULENCY.

We have received a copy of the just issued 18th edition of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.). This issue is in itself indicative of the widespread influence which the author now exercises as a successful expert in the treatment of obesity, while the additions to the evidence which, as a statistician, he is in the habit of collecting on the subject are suggestive of some curious reflections. It is evident that Mr. Russell is annually treating thousands of cases of excessive fat with a success which, in the rapidity and the permanence of its manifestation is truly marvellous. That the enormous popularity of his system is likely to increase in the future is most probable, because it is free from all the drawbacks which have rendered the Banting and other methods of reducing corpulence unacceptable to the majority of the sufferers, who have regarded these cures as rather worse than the complaint. By attacking the causes rather than the symptoms of obesity, he strengthens the digestive organs, thus actually increasing, instead of decreasing, the appetite, while the surplus weight is being reduced at a wonderfully rapid rate, amounting to pounds per week, and often stones per month. Add to this that there is no mystery about the nature of the absolutely innoculous preparation, the recipe for which Mr. Russell supplies in his capital little volume (256 pages), which may be obtained post free by sending six penny stamps to the author's offices, at the address given above. It seems certain, therefore, that, as a result of the happy revolution which the patient research of this specialist, with the aid of a distinguished physician as a collaborateur, has effected, the average of longevity will, before long, be appreciably raised. Obesity is, indeed, one of the few antagonistic influences remaining which, especially among the more prosperous classes, prevent the great majority of people of both sexes becoming centenarians. With advanced ideas in regard to wholesome food, clothing, and sanitary arrangements, it only remains to get rid of clogging fat to live an ideally hygienic, and therefore, a very prolonged life.

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